

# CHURCHILL COUNTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## INTERVIEWS WITH CARL F. DODGE, IRA HAMLIN KENT, MYRL NYGREN

Interviewees: Carl F. Dodge, Ira Hamlin Kent, Myrl Nygren

Interviewed: 1994

Published: 1997

Interviewer: Sylvia Arden

UNOHP Catalog #172

### Description

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The Newlands Project began delivering water to the new farms in 1905, but the pace of agricultural development was slower than had been anticipated. The irrigated soil was excessively alkaline, and there were other problems, such as distance from markets. At first alfalfa was practically the only cash crop; later, beef cattle and feed lots were tried, as were small dairies and poultry farms. Cantaloupes, sugar beets, and potatoes were also cultivated with varying degrees of success.

Most Newlands Project farmers could make a modest living from the land, but real prosperity eluded the county's residents until the U. S. Navy built a large aviation gunnery and training base at Fallon during World War II, freeing the area from its almost total dependence on agriculture. The facility was briefly closed following the war, reopening when the Korean War broke out. It has remained active ever since.

The area served by the Newlands Project has come a very long way from its depressed state at the opening of the twentieth century. However, the growth and development Churchill County currently enjoys derive less from Newlands agriculture than from the presence of the military and increasing numbers of retirees and commuters attracted by a mild climate, outdoor recreational opportunities, and the relative safety and convenience of life in small rural communities. In the summer of 1994, as part of an effort to record a passing era, oral historian Sylvia

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*(Continued on next page.)*

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Carl Dodge's oral history explores several subjects. Chief among them are: changes in agriculture and irrigation practices in Churchill County over time; the origins and economic impact of the naval air station; real estate development and construction in Fallon; and principal pieces of legislation that Mr. Dodge was associated with in his twenty-two year career in the state senate.

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From Ira Kent's oral history the reader learns much about a rural, small town way of life that is rapidly passing in Churchill County. Principal subjects include the old Stillwater community; the operations of the historic I. H. Kent Company and the Kent store in Fallon; developments in agriculture and ranching; Indians and migrant laborers; wild horses and efforts to control them; and the impact of the Fallon Naval Air Station on life in Churchill County.

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Since Myrl Nygren's principal residence was away from Churchill County in the years between 1942 and 1982, her oral history offers a vivid contrast between two very different periods in the history of the county. The impact of the Fallon Naval Air Station on life in the county, both during the war and since Ms. Nygren's retirement, is particularly clear. Pre-war subjects which receive attention are: ranching and agricultural enterprises; family life for a typical ranch family of the era; irrigation and water rights; schooling; and 4-H activities. This oral history also contains information about the founding and early years of the Churchill County Museum.

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*These interviews are part of socioeconomic studies for Churchill  
County's Yucca Mountain Planning and Oversight Program.*

An Oral History Conducted by Sylvia Arden  
April and June, 1994

University of Nevada Oral History Program  
and Churchill County Museum and Archives

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University of Nevada Oral History Program  
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<http://www.unr.edu/oralhistory>

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Printed in the United States of America

Publication Staff:  
Director: R.T. King

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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012



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## INTRODUCTION

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R. T. King, Director  
University of Nevada Oral History Program

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CARL F. DODGE

Carl Dodge: My name is Carlon Fayette Dodge, but I've always gone by Carl rather than Carlon. I was born in Reno, Nevada, June eighth, 1915.

*Sylvia Arden: Tell me a little bit about your grandparents-as much as you can about your grandpa Dodge before they came to Fallon.*

Well, that would have been Harry Dodge. And I really don't know too much about him, except that he came west at a point in time after my father and uncle came west . . . and actually was with my dad up in the Madeline Plains in Lassen County, California and is buried in Reno.

*Did Harry ever come to Fallon?*

Not to my knowledge.

*Now, tell me about your father.*

His name was Carlon Fayette Dodge, Senior. [He was born in Algona, Iowa,

February 1885.] I'm named after my father. My father's mother and father were divorced when he was young. He quit school when he was in the eighth grade to help support his mother. At a later point in time he went down to Mississippi. I don't know what he was doing in Mississippi, but he came to Nevada, to Goldfield, during the gold strike in 1907. He was the first member of the family that came west.

*Tell me about your mother before she was married.*

My father knew my mother [Buena Reed] in Algona, Iowa. He was seven years older than she was. He went back in 1913 and she was nineteen years old at the time, as I recall. She was working in a jewelry store in Algona, and he went back to marry her. It's kind of an interesting story because he went back there with gold pieces in his pocket and one thing and another, and they thought that he was part of the wild, wild West. [laughter] And so he asked her mother if he could marry

my mother, and she said, "No." She [Buena's mother] didn't want to have anything to do with him. So they eloped to Mason City, Iowa, where they were married.

They came west by train after they were married, and at that time, my dad and uncle were living on the Madeline Plains in Lassen County, California. He had sent word ahead that he was going to be there at a certain time, and when they got there a whole bunch of cowboys were there. They were curious about the bride. And so they got off the train and my mother tells the story . . . and she always laughed about it. She said they looked her over, you know, for a long time and nobody said anything. And finally one of these guys said, "She'll never stay boys; she'll never stay." [laughter]

*[laughter] Was that because she was kind of citified looking?*

No, no, not particularly. But she was young and they just figured she wasn't going to stay in a kind of isolated area, and it was a real pioneer life really. Then at a later point in time, of course, her mother got to be very fond of my dad. [laughter]

*What was your uncle's name?*

His name was Dana C., but he was called Bob Dodge.

*That was your father's brother?*

Yes, younger brother.

*Was he married too?*

No, not at that time. He married a girl from Susanville after he came to the Madeline Plains. He knew her in Susanville; they were

married up there. So he was single when he came.

In 1912 my family homesteaded 160 acres of land up there on the Madeline Plains-it was a cattle area, a range area. The Madeline Plains was desert and brush. It was about a mile high and surrounded by mountains where the cattle ranged. One of the very early recollections I have is that my grandmother Dodge moved out from Iowa and was living with my mother and father when I was little. They used to range sheep through that area, and at night the sheep herders would have a campfire; and I can remember-this must have been when I was three years old or something like that-my grandmother taking me out at night to see the sheepy lights on the hills. [laughter] That was an exciting thing to me.

They homesteaded 160 acres of land which had some water access; then my uncle Bob was married and they each built a home. There were two children in each family. I had a sister, and then there were two boys in the other family. And at the point in time they came to Fallon, the children ranged in age from two, three, four, and I was five. The reason they came to Fallon is because the only school up there on the Madeline Plains was a small country school that was quite a distance from the ranch, and it was a mile high. It was a bad winter country and the roads were poor, and they figured it was no place to educate children. So the reason they came here is because I was about ready to enter school. And I did enter the first grade here in Fallon. They came in the summer of 1920.

The reason they picked Fallon . . . that's an interesting story. When my dad came west, he got off the train in Hazen. He took a stage to go down to Goldfield, and it came through Fallon. At that time Fallon was in the early stages of agricultural development, but there was a fair amount of irrigated land off the

Carson River, riparian right land. He came by stage over a sandy road through Fallon, and he thought it was a real desert oasis. He never forgot it. And so when they decided to make the move, I think it was primarily because of his initial impression as he came through here going to Goldfield.

They came here with about three hundred head of horses they had acquired while they were on the Madeline Plains, quite a few horses. Incidentally, they did not sell that Madeline property at that time. They operated it for a number of years, and I finally liquidated it after they both passed away. But they had these horses. And the first year they were here . . . it was really quite a logistical thing. They bought some big hay presses to press alfalfa hay, not in small bales but in very large bales that weighed about 160 to 170 pounds apiece. They had a crew with each press. People put up their hay loose at that time in stacks. So my dad and his brother would buy hay from a farmer, and they would bale that hay and then haul it into the railroad in Fallon to ship it out. They processed ten thousand tons of alfalfa hay and shipped it out the first year they were here. It was a big profit. (At that time they didn't obtain any property in Churchill County. It was at a later point in time when they finally began to acquire some property.)

Then my father went to work about that time as a manager of a department store; and it was a large department store. It's the building that's on the southeast corner of Maine and Center streets that was called Gray, Reid & Wright Company. It was a large department store, considering the number of people here. They had all kinds of things: clothing, hardware, and everything. And he managed that store for a number of years. The store was headquartered in Reno. They had a store there and they had a branch

down here. This was probably in 1921, and he continued on with that until about 1923 or 1924. Meanwhile, they didn't have a home for the horses, so they rented pasture and bought hay for them in the winter and that sort of thing. (The reason that they eventually bought the Island Ranch, which I now own with my son, was for a home for those horses.) In 1923 they started a highway construction business, when it was still a horse business, you know. Everything was teams-the horses pulled the equipment. They started that business and they continued with that until the company was liquidated in 1967.

Our first home was a rented home on East Center Street, and I think there might have been a second one. My maternal grandmother, whose maiden name was Carlon, had a brother named Will Carlon, who was an excellent carpenter. So when my folks built the home on Williams Avenue, they had him come out from Iowa, and he built the home for them. I can remember him . . . he was an interesting guy. He had one of those walrus mustaches, and when he drank coffee he'd get the lower end of his moustache in the coffee and then he'd wipe his fingers. [laughter] And he was a big stout man. They built that home . . . it must have been around 1925. It was a well-built house, and when American Federal Savings bought that property they moved it off and put their own facility on the property. It now belongs to the county-it's over near the Churchill County hospital.

*Did both families live together in that house?*

No, no. My uncle Bob bought a home down near the Oats Park school, and that's where his family lived and the children were raised.

*Do you remember when you first arrived here?*



No. But I can remember starting to school. Down where the Cottage schools are now was what they called the old high school. It's now the junior high school. That was a two story brick building that housed the first and second grades, and that's where I started to school in the first grade. The third and fourth grades were in a similar brick building over where the West End School is now, and that's where I went to the third and fourth grades.

*Did any of your grandparents move to Fallon?*

Yes. It was an interesting thing. Like a lot of other Midwestern families, finally both families moved west—all of them. My grandfather Harry Dodge, my grandmother [Emily Carlon] Dodge, my grandmother [Kitty Corey] Reed, my grandfather [William] Reed—they all moved West finally. Originally my grandmother Dodge came to Madeline Plains and then down to Fallon with them. But the rest of them came west after my folks were in Fallon. In 1923 the family started in the construction business. The first job they had was down in southern Nevada building some of the original roads that were built down there by the state. That was when it was all horse teams. That went on for several years, and then in time it got to be mechanized and the teams went by the boards. [laughter]

*Did they continue with trucks?*

Oh, yes—all kinds of construction equipment: tractors, trucks, gravel plants . . . . The first time I went out to work I was sixteen . . . it was on construction jobs in the summer. I always worked on the construction jobs in the summertime.

*I want you to tell me about your father. He sounds like he was certainly a man with broad*

*interests and talent. Tell me about him as a person.*

He was a very energetic person, and he was an empire builder. Maybe that was one of the problems that might have hastened his death, I don't know. He got into a lot of things. At one point in time after he came to Fallon, he owned four agricultural properties besides the Madeline property. And he got into other types of investments here and there, besides building a construction company. So he was a hard worker and he was a tough trader, and I always thought he was a person of integrity. He always tried to take care of his family well. He and my mother had a happy life together.

I had a very high regard for my father. He and I had always planned on . . . he told me one time when I was young "You know, when all of the children grow up, what we'll do is we'll split up the business interests. You and I will go our own way." And then unfortunately he passed away a year after I graduated from Stanford Law School, so that never materialized.

He was pretty well involved with his business, but we had a good family. I don't know that I ever thought that we were shorted [in] any way, when I was growing up, my sister and myself. There is one thing that I do want to tell you about him: he felt a real weakness in his own life because of the fact that he had to quit school when he was in the eighth grade. And if he'd have lived and I would have been willing, I think he would have still had me in school. [laughter] When I got out of the University of Nevada, I thought that I had all the education that I needed if I was going to work with him, and he was the one that wanted me to go to law school.

*He was living vicariously through you. [laughter]*

Yes, right. That's right. And so his own lack of education . . . it made him have an enormous priority on that as far as his own children were concerned.

*One of the things I am very interested in learning is your observances of the results of the irrigation, and changes as the town was growing.*

One thing that I recollect about the Newlands project was that in the early years it had no drainage in here, and these lands that were irrigated began to get salted up and alkalized up because of high water tables. When they found out they had to set up and put in a drainage system. That started about the time that I came here, and I can remember the big drag lines and shovels that they had where they were building these canals and drain ditches all over the valley.

*What changes did you see because of the development of the irrigation system? Did you begin to see changes around in nature?*

Well, they were gradual. I observed more in later life. There have been a lot of changes in recent years, particularly in the on-farm efficiency of water use in this valley.

*Were they still homesteading or had they finished by that time?*

Oh, no. They were still homesteading. I think they were still buying water rights way into the 1950s and maybe even the 1960s.

*Did your family take advantage of any of the homesteading?*

No. The only place they homesteaded was on the Madeline Plains. But they owned

four different agricultural properties here in the valley: one down near Stillwater, one in the Harmon district, one southeast of Fallon, and then the big Island Ranch south of Fallon. The Island Ranch was the first one they acquired—I think that was in 1927. It was the first time they had a home for the horses.

Their plan was to farm the Island Ranch with mares and then breed them, and then raise the colts and break them to go out onto the construction jobs. So that way they were able to replenish their construction horses. That's a large ranch—it's around twelve hundred acres of irrigated land—and they used to have around fifty men in the summertime on teams doing various things around the ranch. And a lot of horses: the mares and all the colts, and it was the home for the construction horses when they came in off of a job. Of course, the idea was they wouldn't have to board them out somewhere anymore, and they'd raise their own feed and have a place for them when they came off the jobs and then raise the replacements.

*Did anyone ever live out there to manage it?*

There were managers that lived there. Nobody in the family that owned the property ever lived there until my son, who's now out there, living on the property. My dad, of course, had an office in Fallon with the construction business and so on. They built a home on Williams Avenue and always lived there, and my uncle lived in town. When we built this house, the decision I made was to build it here because I thought that if I ever did anything as far as selling the Island Ranch, I didn't want my home involved. And I was still involved with the construction company at that time, and I was spending a lot of time here in town, and so I did not live at the ranch. The other reason why we built this home here



rather than at the ranch is that the children were just getting into their teens.

*Somebody had to be managing there.*

Oh yes. There were different managers on the ranch during that time. There were about three, and the last one that worked for me for many years was a member of an old family here. His name was Alfred Harrigan. His father came to the valley, I think, in 1903 and married the sister of Alfred Oats. He was always called "Whitey" Harrigan. Whitey came to the ranch when he was still in school and chored out there at the ranch before and after school. Then later he worked at the ranch. He could care less about school, so I think he quit when he was about the second year in high school. Whitey was on the ranch for many years. It would have been in the 1980s when he finally left the ranch and went to another situation. There were always foremen there, ranch foremen, and then of course my dad and uncle were always involved—I won't say on a daily basis but they were right here in Fallon and kept an eye on the ranch.

*What kind of feed did they have for the horses?*

Well, it was and still is an alfalfa producing ranch. Its irrigated acreage is about twelve hundred. Normally there would be, I suppose, eight or nine hundred acres in alfalfa, and then grain and a rotation crop and so on. The alfalfa was originally just used basically for our horses. At a later point in time I started a feed mill there and a commercial feedplant as it developed in the late 1950s. So we sold a lot of different types of feed, incorporating alfalfa. It was a pelletized feed, and we developed a big business in horse feed with pellets containing alfalfa and some concentrates and molasses

and grain and so on. And so it kind of went through an evolution. The reason I built the mill was to feed lambs. It was a new feeding program of pellets that were developed at New Mexico A&M college. For many years we fed a lot of lambs.

*Did you own the lambs? Were they on the ranch?*

Yes. I had, ultimately, a joint venture with Armour and Company, the big packing company. I was buying lambs for myself and feeding them; then I started selling lambs to them about the middle 1960s. Later we developed a joint venture with Armour and got to a point where we were feeding about twenty-five thousand lambs a year on the ranch; but also we were shipping them in off the ranges in the fall of the year and feeding them and then sending them on to a packing plant in Dickson, California.

*I want to go back . . . you talked about the irrigation. I want you to tell me from the time you got the ranch . . . start with the elementary points and follow through on the water rights, irrigation, water problems?*

Well, we didn't have too much in the way of legal problems at that time or challenges to the water like we've had in more recent years. But one of the things that happened during my time was . . . the ditches had been put in high profiles of ground so that they could irrigate the fields by gravity. And nothing was square on the ranch, the ditches meandered. So the biggest thing that I have done through the years . . . I began to straighten the property up. I did a lot of releveling, a lot of consolidating the fields. And it resulted in an enormous increase in the efficiency of water use on the property. Before that we were using

internal ditch systems and gravity flows of water to flood irrigate the alfalfa. Originally we had levies maybe fifty feet wide to control water, and then outlets from the ditch. That's what everybody was doing. And then as time went on, I had to change the ditch systems, squared them up as we went. I spent all winter leveling a little ground somewhere or consolidating some fields and changing the ditch system, and this went on, I guess, for fifteen, twenty years.

*Who did you hire to do that? Did you ever hire Indian workers?*

No. We did it on the ranch just with my own people. When we were able to get good tractors and equipment, mechanized equipment, the horses finally were phased out. We didn't have any horses. And so in the wintertime, for the men that I wanted to keep busy, I'd put them out on one of these projects.

*I see. You must have had quite a mind to be able to know that by leveling and changing that you were going to improve the watering. How did you learn that?*

Well, I don't know that I was all that advanced in my thinking about that except that it was a mess the way it was.

*Just observation.*

Yes. For example, the largest job we ever did involved 120 acres of land—I had to move 150,000 yards of material in order to put that field in its present condition. And that area involved all, or part, of seven fields with 135 ditch outlets to irrigate it. When we got done with the project we had twenty-two outlets. And you can't believe how much water that saved, because every time that water was cut

out of 135 of them there was a loss off the end of the field that went into the drain ditches, you follow? So when I reduced that to twenty-two outlets, it was a great saving of water, great saving of water.

*Now I want to go back to when your father bought that land. How did they work out the water rights and how did you pay for the water? Was it restricted? How did that work in the early days?*

That land down there is what you called vested land. It had a riparian right on the south fork of the Carson River, and I can trace ownerships out there back to 1870. It's an old, old property. In 1915 they changed the water law in Nevada from riparian ownership to the appropriation of water. That was about the time that the Newlands project was just beginning to grow. This is an interesting part of the early history of the project: about 21,000 acres of land here in the valley—different parts of the valley, depending on where the river flows—were being irrigated early on by riparian rights, riparian to the river system. So when the project was built, the United States needed to try to bring that land into the project to help pack the operation and maintenance cost. So they asked the people that had those rights, including the rights on the Island Ranch, to surrender their riparian right and take out a right under the project. It was a two way street. It helped broaden the base for operating the project, but it also helped the farmers at that time because until then all they had was just flood irrigation in the spring of the year. And this way, with the stored water at Lahontan, they were able to irrigate on through the season. So finally, all of that vested land . . . People independently made the decision, and they conveyed their riparian rights to the United States, and the

United States made some contracts with them for water under the project. And so those are called the vested lands, and there's about 21,000 acres of them in the valleys, including the Island Ranch.

*Now, was there always sufficient water for irrigation?*

No, there wasn't. Not any more than there has been in the last few years when we went through a six year drought. The valley itself is a very arid area. Over the history of the project the average precipitation—rain, snow, hail, thunder showers—averaged less than five inches a year. Very arid. So they were just depending on the winter storms and we had, over the years, lots of short water years, lots of good water years; but that's just the history of the project. You never know from one year to the next.

*So did they have to ration the user's use?*

The users had to ration themselves. They were on a water allowance in more recent years. The lowest one that we had was two years ago—I guess it was 28 percent is all the water we had. We had a lot of years when we might have had a 50 percent allowance and so on. And we were able to get by. Alfalfa is a fairly deep-rooted plant, and it's pretty hardy; and if you get any amount of water a year on it, why normally it will live. It may not produce a lot but it will live.

*Who determined the allotment and what do you have to pay for that water?*

There was always an operation and maintenance cost after the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District took over the project in 1926. Before that the government was

paying the bill on the distribution of water. I'm not sure whether they were charging the farmers. I don't remember that. Once the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District was established, then they set up an operation and maintenance charge each year against the farmers that they paid on all of their water right land. And that's what operated the project over all these years.

*Was it determined by the acreage?*

Well yes, it was determined by the total acreage and the total budget of the project, don't you see. That was a charge per acre. And that has changed over the years. It's generally been increasing.

*Yes, never decreases.*

No, never decreases [laughter].

*Like taxes [laughter]. When the horses were phased out, when the equipment came in, your father was still involved?*

He died about that time.

*Oh. How old was he when he died?*

Well, he was fifty-five. My uncle and dad both died young. My uncle was fifty-one and he died ahead of my father a year and a half. And then my dad died when he was fifty-five.

*Oh, how sad.*

Well, it was sad. I want to give you a little story about that. I had just graduated from Stanford the year before. He had had a heart attack. He came to Stanford in a wheelchair to see me graduate. And I had always had this plan, even though I had gone to school, that

I was going to work with him. And when he died the next year, it really set me afloat. And it was a real blow. And I didn't know what I was going to do.

Anyway, about the horses: the last time I ever talked to my dad about those horses, he sent me to look at some horses towards Susanville, California that were for sale. He was in the hospital in Reno. I came back into Reno and I told him that they could be bought real cheap. But I said I don't think we want them at any price. "We got horses we can't dispose of now." We had horses down here that we couldn't sell. I mean, you know, no one needed them—work horses and then some lighter horses too, some saddle horses. Dad really took affront at that. He said to me, "Oh, that's not true. If I had to start all over I would start with those horses and make it like I did." So that's what he thought about what those horses had done for him. [laughter]

Dad died, and my uncle had passed away, and it left my mother and aunt, two widows, with all this property: four properties here in Fallon, the property on the Madeline Plains, and the construction business. One thing I had really learned at Stanford was good estate planning, so I tried to help and I did help my mother and my aunt [Mrs. D.C. (Bernys) Dodge, my father's brother's wife]. We began to liquidate properties. We sold the cattle ranch at Madeline with two thousand head of cattle on it. And we began to dispose of properties here in Fallon—the one southeast of Fallon was disposed of, and the one on Harmon Road. And finally my aunt took the Stillwater property for her second son. (The elder son died when he was young.) That left the Island Ranch. She had a half interest, of course, in the Island Ranch. She came into the construction office one day, and she said, "What are we going to do about the Island Ranch?" And I had never really thought

much about it. I never really thought I was going to get it.

*You weren't involved with it?*

Well, no. I had been with the construction company growing up and then in school. So I said, "Well," I said, "I'll make you an offer on it," and I said if it was not satisfactory we'll put it on the market. So I drove to the Island Ranch and talked to Whitey Harrigan because I didn't know anything about the ranch, I really didn't.

*[laughter] You were an attorney. Stanford attorney.*

And into construction. I knew something about the construction business. So I said, "Whitey, Aunt Bernys wants to liquidate her part of the ranch here. I made her an offer." I said, "I'm going to try to buy her half interest if you stay here and operate the property." He said, "Well, I'll stay here as long as you want me to." So anyway, she came back and asked for a little more money. It seemed like a lot, but it wasn't too much additional. So I bought her half interest. And then my mother, of course, had the other half interest. I helped do this planning with her. My mother's very cooperative, and so she gifted her half of the Island Ranch to my sister and myself. So I wound up owning three-quarters of it and my sister a quarter. And Whitey stayed. I have a great admiration for what he was able to help me with, because had he not been there, I would have never had the public life that I have had. I never could have spent the time away from Fallon that I did, particularly when I was in the senate.

Well, we finally sold all of the horses off and we quit breeding them. It became a mechanized business. It was beginning to

be mechanized—not to the extent that it is today—just prior to World War II, in the late 1930s, early 1940s.

*When the horses were then gone, did you still need all that land? What did you do with the land?*

Well, I needed the land, but I didn't need fifty people to operate it, because they were all teamsters. So I began to use tractors and better equipment and so on. Then we began to reduce the number of people that we needed on the ranch. Today we operate that property with about five or six people.

*The fifty people who were there, when it was the teamsters and the horse ranch, where did all these helpers come from?*

Well, they were called bindlestiffs. They just came seasonally and they were just people that packed a bedroll on their backs. A lot of them had worked for the construction company, you know, and they knew about the Island Ranch, so they'd come in here in the spring of the year and work here during the summer, and then they'd go somewhere where it's warm in the winter.

*Were any of them of different ethnic groups, or any Indians . . . or anyone?*

Anyone. They just were bindlestiffs.

*And did you have bunks for them?*

Yes. We housed them there, and they had a big cookhouse. Kept cooks, that sort of thing. It was a big crew.

*Did you ever go out and visit when they were out there?*

Oh yes, sure. Yes. And I can remember when I was young going out where the hay presses were operating, and they'd have a little crew and they'd have a cook with each one of them. They'd have teamsters that hauled the hay back and forth, and then they had two horses that went around and pulled to provide power for the press, so there was a teamster there. And then they'd have a man up on the stack using what's called a Jackson fork. He'd fork the hay, and then there'd be another teamster that would pull that fork over and then they'd drop it into the top of this bale press. All told, I suppose each crew might have been ten or twelve people and had their own little cookhouse on wheels. [laughter]

The three hay presses just moved here and there around the valley. They never went out of the county—it was all within the valley here. Some of them hauls, of course, were longer than others. See, Stillwater was sixteen miles away and the Island Ranch was seven, just to give you an idea. It's just here and there and wherever they bought this hay in the valley. They had to haul it in and . . .

*So, there was an awful lot of hay in the valley, a lot of ranching going on.*

Well yes, that's about all there was. When we came here, my guess was there might have been three or four thousand people in the valley, but the town was a small community. There were a lot of farmers. It was homesteaders and small property owners that came in here from everywhere.

*Did you observe, as you were growing up, the increase in these little farms and homesteads?*

Well no. When I was that young I wasn't paying much attention to that, but as I grew older, the trend was in a different direction.



Those smaller properties were selling out to larger owners. At one point, for example, maybe a man had a dairy on forty acres of ground. Today the dairies are large. They have to buy outside hay. They don't produce their own hay. So there's been an evolution that's gone from small farms to larger farms. Now it's beginning to go the other direction; a breakup of larger farms going to rural dwellers.

*Developing homes on an acre or two of land?*

Yes, four or five or ten acres.

*Military and retired people coming in?*

Yes.

*Now, the construction company and the ranch, is that one location?*

No. The construction company had a building in town. They originally were in a building that was just opposite of the I.H. Kent facility on this side of the railroad track. It had been an old flour mill, and it was a wooden building and it burned out. Then they bought a property that had an office building on it and a metal shop. And then they built a large building north of the railroad track on North Maine. When we liquidated the construction business, we sold that to Sierra Pacific Power Company, and that's the headquarters. And the Dodge Construction name was left on the front of the building that was built in 1937. They had a storage area there and a shop and all of that. That didn't have anything to do with the ranch, but at one point the ranch and Dodge Construction were operated as a single business. But in the Depression years, the only way they could get financing was

to separate off the construction business. During the Depression years, there was even more money that the federal government put out for highways and that sort of thing, for make-work projects. So they split the business: the ranch operated as Dodge Brothers, and the construction company became Dodge Construction, Inc.

Dodge Construction, Inc., operated through the years in the heavy and highway construction business and the mining business. We shipped iron ore out of the Lovelock area to Japan for several years. We did a lot of placer mining and that sort of thing at Round Mountain and Plumas . . . Eureka in the Feather River Canyon, [California] The company was owned by two widows. The manager of the company had been with them early on . . . E.J. Maupin, Jr., who was getting along in years. That did not interest me as a future . . . to be in the construction business. I didn't want to carry on and there wasn't anybody else in the family, so it was liquidated in 1967.

*Let's go back now to the ranch and follow it from the time period when you then were in charge.*

All right. Well, I guess one of the big events on that ranch was in the latter 1950s, when I became aware of a new feeding program for lambs on a pelleted feed. It was developed at New Mexico A&M University, and I read about it in a bulletin. I sent to the university and I got some information about it. I was trying to develop a reliable outlet for the feed that I was producing. We were all field-chopping our hay at that time. And of course, field-chopped, you couldn't really sell it away from the ranch. It wasn't baled or in a concentrated condition where you could ship it—we were putting up the hay in just long stacks.

We never baled hay. We went from the long hay to chopped hay, which was a very inexpensive way of putting up hay. But when I made that decision, I knew I was committed, one way or another, to use that feed on the ranch. Now, I started speculating—fattening cattle—I'd buy cattle and bring them in and feed them. But I became convinced that had no future, particularly after they developed the large commercial feed yards in America. Building that pellet mill looked to me like it might be a pretty good outlet for the hay. This was about 1957. I built the mill and I didn't know anything about nutrition. You know, I hadn't been educated that way, but I became self-educated to where I felt I was a pretty good nutritionist. So we kind of drifted in to the commercial milling business. I found out, finally, that besides being a good lamb feed, we began to sell a lot of it out to people that had riding horses. Had a lot of advantages for that. And so, we finally got into the commercial milling business. And at the peak of that business, the biggest year we had was about 18,000 tons of feed, which is a lot of feed.

*What were the ingredients of these pellets?*

I was trying to utilize the alfalfa that we produced. For the lamb feeding I made a decision to use seventy percent alfalfa, about twenty percent small grains—this would be wheat, barley, and milo—and ten percent molasses. Later, when we got in the commercial milling business, I also made some straight concentrate feeds like a dairy concentrate and a steer pellet. And then I got to where I was making a small pellet for poultry feed and for rabbit feed. So I had a complete line of feeds. The mill had treated us real well in its time, but there came a point where it wasn't feasible to continue it. And so we closed it down, I think about 1986 or 1987.

After I built the mill I started out purchasing lambs. At that time there were about six hundred thousand sheep in Nevada. I bought lambs mainly off the ranges in the fall of the year. Mainly I was buying them just here in Nevada. At the outset I just fed the lambs and sold them on the open market. But at a later point in time, I got to dealing strictly with the Armour & Company plant in Dixon, California, which processed more lambs and ewes than any plant in the west coast—over five hundred thousand a year. And it turned out, fattening the lamb on that ration was the best quality of lamb that was ever produced on the west coast. It was not fat. It was nice, lean meat. It was wonderful lamb. I didn't know that, but the Armour buyer kept urging me to feed more lambs. And I said, "Look, I got my neck out forty miles now." I said, "If you want me to do that, why get in and help share the cost." So about two weeks later, he showed up here with an Armour vice-president. And this guy, I liked him immediately. And in about thirty minutes, we had a deal put together. [laughter]

*What was the deal?*

Well, the deal was that Armour would loan us some money at the prime rate, which was a big advantage . . . it was a big company nationally, and they'd loan us the money. They would buy the lambs through this buyer. He bought them all over the West. He'd buy for the joint venture, and he'd take off the fat lambs and ship directly to the plant. The intermediate feeder lambs we'd ship into Fallon to fatten. The light feeders we sent to pasture in the beet tops in Southern Idaho during the fall—it was a good feed. There was a lot of sugar in it. It took us about sixty or seventy days to finish off these lambs as they came in to the feedlots. So, we start getting

them in September when the weather started to cool. And then by December, we'd have them finished and out of the feedlot. I could handle about twelve thousand at a time. Then what we would do on those beet top lambs, we'd take off whatever fat lambs there were and send them direct to the plant for credit to the joint venture. And we'd bring the feeders into Fallon. So I wound up where I was feeding about twenty-five thousand a year.

*Unbelievable! How many people did you have to hire?*

Oh, we didn't have to hire too many. I had one guy that fed and took care of the lambs.

*How did they feed them?*

They had self-feeders.

*And pellets are clean.*

Yes. And so we built a little feed truck that had an auger where we could dump the pellets into it from overhead storage, and then we would just drive along the mangers and it would self-feed. During the day, why he would take care of the water and the sick lambs and that sort of thing. I worked them all myself. Every Monday morning, I would work what lambs were ready to ship. And then on that Monday, I would call the buyer at the plant and tell him how many loads we had to send in the following week so that he could plan a week ahead.

*And they would bring their trucks down?*

They'd send trucks out of Dixon. There was a commercial trucking company that pioneered the handling of lambs, getting the maximum on the trucks and trailers. So,

nearly every Monday we would ship lambs for the week. And that worked. It was a real wonderful joint venture. It was the only speculated feeding deal that I ever knew about, in any type of livestock, where we made money for seven straight years. We had a couple of years with losses—not too heavy, but we had some losses. But we had seven years straight where we made money on that deal, and consumed a lot of feed. It was just a good thing all the way around.

Finally, they developed a better feeding program that was less costly per pound of gain on almost straight corn. And there was a lot of that feeding went on in Southern Idaho and in Colorado, so that part of the market was lost. Then the other part of the market was lost because I was supplying a lot of small dairies, and the dairies began to consolidate into larger dairies. They were buying the ingredients as cheap as I could buy them, and then they had these big mixer wagons. And they didn't have to pay the cost of the processing, you see, and putting them into the pellets. So I lost that market. The peak we already had was about eighteen thousand ton, and then it began to fall off. And it finally got to a point where . . . There were two things involved: one was we really had lost a lot of the market, not through any fault of our own; and the other was that the plant was beginning to develop some obsolescence. In order to continue, it would have taken a major amount of money to redo the electrical system and some other things. So we made the decision, finally, just to close it down.

*What happened then?*

Well, what happened then is my son, who I helped acquire some property just south of the Island Ranch, started farming on his own land. He had a lot of good experience before



he came back to the ranch. He was raising alfalfa and he was baling his hay down there. When we shut the mill down, it was not feasible any longer to chop that hay because you couldn't do anything with it except feed it on the ranch. So, for the first time on the Island Ranch when he came back, we started baling our hay, primarily to sell away from the ranch. And so that's been going on since then.

*That's the major operation now?*

Yes. It's a big market in California.

The other thing that has developed in recent years is an export market for compressed bales, which has developed a big outlet, particularly in Japan and more recently in Taiwan and South Korea. In Japan, and, I guess, maybe to an extent in Taiwan and South Korea, they don't raise fibrous crops like alfalfa. They raise food for human consumption . . . row crop stuff. They don't have the land. And the dairy cows need a certain amount of fiber in order to maximize the milk production, but they don't have the fiber, and that's what the hay furnishes. That's gotten to be a big market, not only for hay out of this area, but out of Canada and out of Southern California. In 1992 there were over 500,000 tons of those compressed bales shipped to the Pacific Rim out of California alone.

*So the exporters buy it from you?*

Yes, that's correct.

*And they're dealing overseas?*

That's correct.

*OK. When did that first start?*

Originally, it started with pellets just like we were making. They needed to develop a better density. The hay in a normal bale is not that dense by weight, and they needed to develop enough density that they could get twenty-three tons into one of these containers that they could ship overseas. So, one way or another, they had to compress that hay. So it started out as a pellet. And then they have what they call a "cuber" which makes a little kind of a square compressed amount of hay. They have a lot more density than the bale. And then they went to these compressed bales—they are able to take a 120 pound bale and compress it down to a much smaller size. The end result is that they can get twenty-three tons of hay into the containers. We've been selling to an exporter does the compressing. He buys the hay from around the valley and from other areas. And so that's gotten to be a big business in this part of Nevada and in California and in Canada and in the Northwest area—Seattle, Portland.

*Is that exporter in this area? Where is the closest one?*

No. He's headquartered in California. He originally set up a plant to compress these bales in here a few years ago and started buying local hay.

*What year did you start selling to him?*

In the late 1980s.

*Has the volume he's buying increased?*

Yes. It's increased all over the West. It's a big outlet.

*How much are you selling?*

Well, I think the most we ever sold to him in any one year was somewhere between two and three thousand tons.

*And it's still going strong?*

Still going. Now we have other outlets for that hay, too, mainly in California—a lot of the dairies . . . and dry cow feed and beef cattle. Particularly because of this export business and one thing or another, California just is not self-sufficient in hay anymore. So they buy hay from the closest place. This northern Nevada area is a good area. They buy hay out of Arizona, more and more as time goes on . . . and I've told my son, I think there's a better future just raising alfalfa here because I think as California grows, there will be more of that land taken out of production, and more dairies, and the market will be there for the hay. So it's kind of an evolution thing, based on the economics of the situation. Well, a lot of the hay is used locally, there are a lot of local dairies; but a pretty good percentage of all the hay that is produced here is shipped elsewhere.

*Now, how is that done physically? Do you bring it to them or do they come and get it?*

No, they come and buy it in truck and trailer lots.

*That's why you see so many trucks coming through Fallon?*

That's correct.

*And so is all of the Island Ranch in alfalfa hay now?*

Normally more of the acreage has been in rotation of small grains. But this year for

the first time, it's all in hay—about twelve hundred acres.

*Do you have any animals on the ranch?*

No, not to speak of, no. So the ranch depends on selling the hay.

*Then you have seasonal workers coming?*

Well, yes, to an extent, although we try to keep the men that we really need in the summer. I have two of them that have been with me for years that stay there year round. And then this year he's had a third man there. He's a good man, and in order to keep him we had to give him some winter work.

Now, another thing that I wanted to say to you about this valley: we have tried different kinds of row crops, and in my opinion Mother Nature never intended any other use for this area than to raise alfalfa and small grains, because it only has about 120 frost-free days. It's a short growing season. The second reason it's not good for row cropping is, particularly in the years when they had to depend a lot on row crop labor, we were always a labor deficient area. So it never fit. And that's why we have never turned as an alternative to more row crops here.

*I see. Before we leave the ranch, anything more that you want to tell about it? It looks like it's going to stay in the family. Is that right?*

Well, it's going to stay through my son. His boy is just graduating from high school and we don't know where his interests might be. But my son really likes to farm and he has a lot of pride about the ranch. You know, we've talked about these water problems, and he said, "Well, a lot of these people figure that we're not going to have agriculture in the

future. I'll tell you one thing, I'm going to be the last one to leave." [laughter]

*Oh, that's wonderful. That must make you feel good.*

Yes, right. He's a wonderful farmer. He loves to farm.

*Does he get right out in his Levis and do work, or just supervise it?*

Well, no. He does to an extent, but it's a big enough operation that he usually just takes care of getting his crew lined out and taking care of supplying things that he needs and all of those things. But I wanted to tell you why this agriculture has never changed.

*That's the first I've heard about that. And that's very interesting. I know that there were attempts . . . the beets that didn't work out, you know.*

We were part of that. It was kind of an interesting thing. In order to maximize the beet production, we had to get them in early. We planted them in April. And then with other growers we built a labor camp; we brought people in directly from Mexico on an approved deal. Sugar beets are planted on beds and irrigated from furrows, and they need to be thinned—as the beets start to grow, in order to let them get big, they have to be thinned out. At that time, they had not perfected mechanical thinning so they had to have hand labor, and that's where we had to use this Mexican labor.

*How many acres?*

I think on the ranch we had somewhere between thirty or forty acres in beets at a

time. That's a lot of acreage for what we were doing. And in the valley we had several growers, other farmers, along with us. We had an organization, and we might have had 250 to 300 acres total. The beets were shipped by rail out of here to Spreckels Sugar in California.

*I know they built the beet factory. It was here for a while.*

Well, that was an earlier project. This was later, about 1970. They had a disease called curly top that whipped them in the early days. The earlier ended in the 1930s. Anyway, row cropping . . . there's a limited amount of it here, but as a major thing, I don't see a future unless you get something that doesn't need hand labor and can be produced in that short growing season.

*So how did you get these workers from Mexico?*

Well, it was an arrangement we made where we could bring them in legally by contract. There had to be certain requirements for housing and medical attention and all those things, which we followed.

*You did better for them than California does. [laughter]*

And then we worked through a labor contractor, who actually ran the crew. And we paid him so much an acre—I forget how that was done—for the thinning. And they did need to be thinned because otherwise you would never get a beet that could develop the right size because they're too close together. We had one field at the ranch . . . best ground we've got on the Island Ranch—I got on Spreckels's gold star list one year for the amount of sugar that came off of it.

*How many years did this go on?*

Oh, I think three or four. Something like that.

One time we had a pretty good sized field in, and, as I say, we had to start them early. They're pretty hardy, but they'd frost and then it'd kill out the plants. And so one year we had them going pretty good and it was late, along in May sometime. And the Spreckels guy came up and it had snowed the night before. [laughter] He took pictures of snow this deep over the poor little sugar beet plants. He just couldn't believe it. [laughter] So, you know, those are the problems that we faced.

*Did any of those Mexican workers stay in the area?*

No. Now, one year we had some help from . . . They had an Indian school over here at Stewart, south of Carson City. And they brought a lot of Indians in out of Arizona, the tribes down there. They gave them a five year program—three years of basic . . . to understand English and how to handle a bank account and that sort of thing. And then they'd put them in vocational training, whatever programs they had. One year we had some of these Indian boys over here that did that work from Stewart. These were kids that were in their teens. They were living over here at this camp that we had, and one time over a holiday or something, all these Indians left except one Indian who walked to the Island Ranch. It must have been eight or nine miles. Out there he had his hoe and was hoeing beets. And when he finished that program we hired him, and he's still at the Island Ranch. His name is Spelman Arizona. He's a Navajo Indian, been with us thirty years by now.

*Did you have any other Indian workers that occasionally come in?*

Well, occasionally we did. I had another guy that was there at the Island Ranch. He was a big, strong, husky guy and I knew him briefly before the war. His name was Ray Lannen. One day after the war was over, about 1947 or so, I was out helping work some cattle. We were putting them through branding or something, and I was prodding them along the shoot when he drove up in a pickup. (His family originally come out of Montana, and he'd been up there after the war was over.) He drove up and I shook hands with him and we talked a little bit about the service. He told me about when he got out. I think he was in the Marine Corps, the Army or the Marine Corps. So I said, "What are you doing down here?"

And he said, "I'm looking for a job."

And I said, "You got it." [laughter] And he's still there. He came in 1947, so that's pretty near fifty years ago.

*And he's still a good worker?*

Oh, yes. He's not as active as he used to be, but he's a very faithful worker. He raised a family, had five children he raised there. Arizona has a small house, and then Ray's is a better house. As his family expanded, we built onto it. And so they both live there on the ranch.

*Any other experiments on that ranch? Did you ever raise melons or turkeys or . . . ?*

No, never turkeys. The ranch will raise some row crops. I told you about the fifty men? They raised their own garden vegetables. We had a reservoir where the water came into the ranch from the distribution system, TCID. And we had some good land right up next

to that reservoir that we could just turn out water when we needed it out of the reservoir, to irrigate relatively small acreage. Well, it wasn't all that small. It was about fifteen acres.

*You didn't need the ditch riders? You could just do it yourself?*

No. The water was charged to us once it went into the reservoir, so we didn't need that. The point was we had control on water there when we needed it. The ranch would hire a gardener, and so they put in a lot of vegetables that they raised through the summer for their own use at the ranch and the cookhouse. They had all kinds of garden vegetables—corn and squash and all of those crops. I think some potatoes.

*The house that your son lives in, when was that built?*

This is an interesting story. We had a big old two-story house that was a cookhouse. They had some bunk space for men on the second floor. They had another building for these transient workers in the summertime. But anyway, that building burned down about 1947—it was an electrical problem in the wall. It started in the wall, and there was no way to save it once it started. There was an old man named Tom Dolf who at one time was in the Nevada senate from here and was an early farmer here. (His grandson, Kenny Kent, operates the property out here now.) It was right at dark, and of course you could see the flames all over the valley. He came out there and he said, "You know, I remember when this building was moved in here from Virginia City in 1885." And so anyway, after the building burned down, the construction company had a portable-type kitchen-dining setup that we used temporarily. It was the

same time they were building the Churchill County Hospital, the original building. The builder had the plan for the hospital and for reinforcement on the walls, the block, and everything. At that time, we didn't have nearly as many men that we were boarding, but we were still using a boarding house. So I made a little layout about what we needed in the way of a room for her [the cook] and storage areas in the kitchen and the dining area, and he built the building. It didn't take him long to put it up. Then after we closed the cookhouse down, we converted it into a home. It's not an ideal layout; it's basic. Then we added to it at a later point in time. So my son has lived there and it's comfortable.

My father and uncle bought the Island Ranch property from R.L. Douglass, whose home was just east of the Island Ranch and who owned this property. He had a farmer foreman by the name of C.W. Renfro, and Renfro came with the deal. (They bought the property in 1927. Well, actually the deed, I think, was in 1928.) And it was Dodge brothers and Renfro. Renfro had a third interest in the property, and my dad and uncle a third each, and Renfro was the foreman. He was an excellent foreman for his time, an excellent foreman and a very fine man.

During the Depression years it was very difficult for my dad and uncle to survive. You know, they had obligations here and there, and it was just nip and tuck whether they were going to be able to hold the thing together. That's when they separated the construction company from the ranch for financing purposes, and the construction company is what saved them, because there was a lot of public works during that period. Anyway, one night in 1933 or 1934 Charlie didn't come home. Around dinnertime Mrs. Renfro got a hold of Whitey and she said, "I don't know where Charlie is, but maybe



you ought to look around for him.” He had killed himself out there on a ditch-bank. He got so despondent about . . . he saw no hope for his own future, and it was an unfortunate thing. He had farmed the property, and it was a big property. He had fifty men, and I remember him leveling land in the fall and winter months. Anyway, that was a sad thing. My dad and mother made a settlement with his wife, and then they had to hire another foreman . . . which they had two or three of them before Whitey finally took over.

*How did they pull out of the Depression?*

Well, as I say, the only thing that saved them was the construction business. They just struggled along with the ranch and with the property up north. Ira Anderson, the guy that ran the ranch up there at Madeline, had an interest in the ranch property after they left there. I made a settlement with him later when he was getting ready to retire. He told me a story one time: He had a buckaroo by the name of Harvey. One time my dad came up there and told Ira Anderson, “You know, we just don’t have any money, and we really can’t afford to keep Harv. But,” he said, “you can offer him fifteen dollars a month and his board if he wants to stay.” So that’s how bad it was through the Depression years and it was just a tough deal. And the man stayed. He didn’t have anywhere to go, so he had his place to live and food and fifteen bucks a month. It was a bad time.

I always thought maybe the Depression might have accelerated my own dad’s death, too. When he died the company was in pretty good condition, but the Depression had been a stressful time for him, trying to hold everything together. He didn’t want to go bankrupt. They were fortunate enough that they were able to stay out of bankruptcy and

basically hold things together. I don’t know how they did it, but a lot of other people struggled to do those things.

One of the things that saved them at that time is they were doing some work over in Utah . . . some highway work. And they were doing business with a Utah bank. And during the Depression years, the Wingfield chain in Nevada collapsed. Wingfield had thirteen banks, one in Fallon, and over the years he had helped finance my dad and uncle. They had a very close, personal relationship. Wingfield had a property down here, and he used to come down and they’d see each other a lot. He had a little agricultural property here. So when the Wingfield chain folded up, nobody could get any money—the money was all tied up, what there was. Fortunately, my dad and uncle had money over in this bank in Utah through the construction business, and they had work going on over there that kept some money flowing and kept them afloat in a very difficult time when you couldn’t lay your hands on a dollar anywhere. And so in a sense, that’s the only thing that saved them.

They started with the construction business here in Nevada. They started one of the early companies. They started in 1923 with some original roads down in some of the rural areas of Clark County in southern Nevada, and then they began getting contracts in different parts of the state, all over. And they did some work in other neighboring states. And then during the war, they helped build the original airports out here at the Fallon Navy base. And they built an airport down at Inyo in Southern California on Highway 395. They were in all kinds of that type of construction, and they even got into the mining business. This iron ore business out of Lovelock went on for several years. So they were kind of diversified and had the

equipment to do all of those things. That business was finally liquidated in 1967.

*You mentioned earlier that some summers you worked in the construction company?*

I always did.

*OK. So tell me how old you were when you first started and what kinds of things you did?*

I was sixteen. The first summer I went out was a job which was fairly close. It was a stretch when you . . . if you come to Fallon from Carson City, you go through Silver Springs. Well, there was a stretch of road just south of Silver Springs going towards Yerington. A guy named Smiley Atkinson (later a county road superintendent here) was a superintendent on the job, and he put me on a big, old hard-steering truck. We were hauling gravel or something, and the first thing that happened is that when another truck came by me and I got over towards the edge of the grade, I just wasn't strong enough and big enough to steer that truck and I tipped it over. I didn't get hurt, fortunately.

*Anyone else in the truck?*

No. No. I just had this load. And so anyway, Smiley was all put out, and he said, "Well, you're not going to make it that way, so I guess I better put you in the office where all you can break is a pencil." [laughter] So actually, I got to be a timekeeper.

*Were you glad?*

Oh, I don't know; but anyway, I enjoyed working. I was out in different places. And then one summer, I worked over in Utah. Through central Utah, they had some oiling

work . . . just surface work on some of the existing roads. They had it in different areas, but it was a whole summer, my first summer out of the state. I always saved my money. My folks had started a savings account for me up in Lassen County in Susanville when they were on the Madeline Plains, and I loved to look at that savings book. I knew how much money I had. So I went over there that year (I must have been about maybe eighteen) and I remember my dad telling me, "You know," he said, "it's there [the savings account] if a problem arises." Something else he said was, "For God's sake, do something even if it's wrong. Do something!" And so I always remembered that. The other thing was, I had my board and room over there.

*Where was that?*

Parowan, Utah. We boarded in a little hotel there. The total crew was probably ten or twelve men. They came from Fallon, basically. They might have hired a few local people, but not many. They brought people that they knew had specific skills.

*Were you the youngest of the crowd?*

Oh, by far. These guys were just working stiffs at different ages. But anyway, Dad gave me thirty dollars when I went over there . . . for myself. And the only cost I had was my laundry. And I came home with twenty-one bucks. Nine dollars is all I spent the whole summer. So anyway, I started saving my money. And then at one point in time during the Depression my dad bought the Section Ranch, which is just south of the Island Ranch, for me. You know, those properties were practically given away at that time. And even though they didn't have any money, he bought this property for me for, I think, twelve

thousand dollars. It was a 780 acre ranch with water rights. I leased it to a couple of guys. I was still in school—see, I was twenty-four when I got out of law school. Finally these people gave up the lease. They had other things they wanted to do. I couldn't find anybody to lease the property, and I was still in school, and it was a real problem to me—I didn't know anything about farming. So I finally sold the property for \$35,000.

I had saved my money when I worked in the summers, and I had this savings account from the time I was small, so when the time came that I made the offer to my aunt for her share of the Island Ranch, I had \$50,000 in the bank. That was the only reason that I was able to buy the Island Ranch. If I hadn't had any money, I don't think I could have hacked it, and I don't think she would have been satisfied with it. But I paid her the fifty down, and then on installment payments I paid her off the balance. It's funny how these things work around. As I say, I never had been involved at the ranch; I didn't know anything about agriculture; and I can't tell you why I even made the decision to buy that property, but I did. And it was only because I had saved that money over the years that I was able to do that. As I mentioned earlier in the interview, I had this agreement with Whitey Harrigan that he would stay and operate it. So from there, I look back and I shudder at some of the things that happened to me that I survived. [laughter] But it's like a lot of human experiences that you have, you know.

*When you went to Stanford, did your dad take care of paying for that?*

Oh, yes. He did. He'd have had me in school the rest of my life. I didn't want to go down there particularly, because I was going to work with him and I didn't think that I

needed to go to law school to do that. But the thought did occur to me that there were so many young people that would have loved to have the opportunity, that couldn't do it. So, it really would have been crazy if I hadn't taken advantage of it. So, I applied and I was accepted . . . it was luck. They only take a very small percentage of the applicants, and they get so many applications. There were only eighty-six in my entering class in law school. And I think the only reason, really, that I got in is that I was a student body president at the University of Nevada.

*And you probably had darn good marks.*

Well, I did the last couple of years. I fooled around a lot the first couple of years. But the last couple of years were pretty good. But, I think the reason I was accepted was I was a student body president. So anyway, they admitted me. And there was one other Nevada boy that came in that class—Bruce Beckley from Las Vegas. So there were only two of us from Nevada. Eighty-six of us entered, and there were thirty-six of us that graduated. Some of them were not in our entering class—they had been there four years or so. So, there was a big attrition rate in that class. I wasn't trying to be competitive particularly at the university; but when I went to Stanford, I knew I was in a different crowd, and I had made up my mind they weren't going to show this country boy up! Fortunately, I didn't have any friends there or any social relationships . . . male or female. [laughter] So I rented a room from a family, and there was a separate entrance. And I ate my meals out. You know, maybe other people have done this, but I had fifteen hours of classes and I studied seventy hours a week. That's eighty-five hours. This was Saturday, Sunday, holidays, everyday. That was eighty-five hours a week. And you



divide that through and that's an average of about twelve hours a day.

*Well, it shows discipline and self-motivation.*

That's right. And the sequel was that I graduated fourth in my class.

*Now, don't you think that having all of that legal background and all, your business dealings and your political life has been an absolute asset. And then having that on your record.*

Oh, yes. It always stood me in good stead. When I was in the state Senate, I was always on the judiciary committee. And you know, I made my contributions along with everybody else.

I did practice law briefly. After my dad passed away I was really adrift, so I passed the bar examination and I decided that I would open a practice in Fallon, which was not fruitful for the reason that there were three lawyers here that had most of the business. And as a sole practitioner, you know, I didn't do that well. I got by . . . and then the war came along in 1942. I actually enlisted in the naval officer training program, the V7 program, in 1941, and then I was called up in July of 1942. After I came home from the service I had an opportunity to join a law firm in San Francisco where my closest friend in law school was a partner. His name was Charles Jonas—he's still a close friend. I thought about it seriously for a while, and one morning I woke up and I thought to myself that I would never be happy anywhere but in Nevada. And the die was cast at that point.

I turned my back on the law practice to, in effect, help out with some family matters. It wasn't that I was feeling I was making a sacrifice for the family, but I was the oldest child and I was the only one that had

completed an education at that point. Well, my sister had, but she wasn't actively involved. So I did feel a certain obligation to both my mother and my aunt. You know, that was a big decision, and I was so thankful in light of the good things that have happened to me in my lifetime, in Nevada, that I made that decision.

*Did you have anyone that you talked it over with, or was it purely your own decision.*

No. My own decision. That was in 1946. I came home just before the holidays in 1945, out of the service, so this was in 1946.

*And so you were still single, so you didn't have to consult a spouse?*

I was still single. It was just one of those deals that, you know, I just had to make the decision what I was going to do with my future with my dad gone.

*And I bet your family, your mother and your aunt, I bet they were all relieved.*

Well, I know that my mother was. And I think my aunt was because, you know, there was really nobody else to . . . well, I don't know. I'm not going to say that somebody wouldn't have helped them do their planning and make the decisions.

*Well, it's different if it isn't family; also, that was a major, heavy responsibility you took on.*

That's right.

*But I'm sure by then you had the shoulders to do that.*

Well, I guess so. You look back and I wasn't burdened by having to do it, if that's

what you're saying. Sometimes I got a little scared. [laughs]

*I know that there was a great big earthquake here. Was that in 1954?*

Yes. Our children were small at that time, and we had taken a vacation with the children at Zephyr Cove, which is one of the popular places on the Nevada side as you go to the south end of the lake. The children were sleeping in a loft that was, you know, like on the second floor in this small cabin deal. And Betty and I were sleeping down below. That quake happened, and it seemed to me it was around two o'clock in the morning, and it shook things pretty good even up there. So the kids woke up and they were startled, and they came barreling down and jumped in the bed. We finally got them back to sleep, and Betty said, "I wonder where that was centered."

I said, "Well, I suppose down along the San Andreas fault in Southern California." We went back to sleep, and when we woke up in the morning, I wasn't even thinking about it. I went over to the store to get a paper, and a couple of guys were talking about this quake centering near Fallon, Nevada. My mother was living alone, and of course nobody was at our home which was then on Williams Avenue. My mother finally got through to us (the phone lines were jammed) in the afternoon and said that she had been over to see what she could see through the windows at the house and there didn't seem to be any damage. She said she had some things fall off the shelves and one thing or another. But it turned out she had more serious damage to a fireplace chimney that hadn't been reinforced, she thought, but she didn't know it at that time. At the ranch, we had a lot of damage that was caused by topsoil that was underlaid

with sand. It turned out there was a lot of movement in that sand underneath, and there were a lot of places that heaved and sank. I had one section of a ditch about twenty-five or thirty feet long that was displaced about eight feet. It just took that section, moved it right out of the ditch line and moved it over. And so it was damaged. But, as it turned out, it wasn't a major portion, because we were still pretty well able to irrigate the fields. But as time went on, as we rotated those fields, we had to do a lot of work releveled to even out the fields so that the water would flow uniformly. And we had a lot of damage. I had a shop building that the concrete floor broke and heaved. All that sort of thing that took us several years actually to correct. The place that we lived in was not seriously damaged. My mother's . . . as I say, she had to rebuild a big, tall chimney deal, and it was a two-story house. She had to have that reinforced and rebuilt. But it wasn't anything that was major. Now, if you ask Hammy [Ira Kent, Stillwater area] about this, he'll tell you about a lot of damage done in that area at that time. And there was damage all over the valley. But anyway, those things all got taken care of in time. No one was hurt or anything, but it was a heavy earthquake. It measured around 6.7 or 8, I think.

*Now I want to start the years of your schooling from your earliest days. Just whatever you can remember that you feel is important.*

I don't remember that much about the first four grades. They were in two different schools, one being for first and second; then the West End School, where Margaret York was a teacher. We lived at that time on Williams Avenue. I don't remember how I got to school when I started—I don't know whether I rode a bike or not. But I remember that when I went to that grammar school,

which is down in Oats Park and that was quite a ways from . . . I always rode a bike to school.

My maternal grandmother lived near the grammar school, and I took my lunch with her. (These were grades five through eight.) I had a dog, a wonderful pet. He was a bulldog named Pal. And I had a little basket on the back of my bicycle, and Pal rode to school with me and then he would go over and stay at my grandmother's place. He was always there when I came out of school. He would wait for me as I came down the steps, and we'd get on the bike and ride back home.

I don't remember through the grammar school years anything that was too significant. I was always a good speller; I liked to read. You know, at that time, they were strong on phonics, so I had wonderful instruction in phonics. I guess because of that I became a little more articulate than I might have been otherwise.

I was never that strong in math. I got along all right—about average, I guess, but it wasn't my long suit, and it showed up when I was in high school. I worked pretty hard. And it depended on the instructors. When I went to the university, I was going to study engineering because of the construction business. And boy, you know, I didn't take to that at all. So I switched after the first year, back to an arts and science course.

*Let's skip the first four years of school and go from fifth to eighth. Did the school have any extracurricular activities—music, sports, glee club, band, anything that you entered?*

No, I never was involved, and I'm not so sure at that point in time they had that many extracurricular activities. I don't remember just where they taught music along the way, but that was never a big interest with me. I don't know if I started in the grammar school,

but I got involved in debate and oratory when I was in high school.

*So, you see where your interests were fairly early.*

Yes.

*Were you a fellow who liked social life?*

Oh, yes. Reasonably. I don't think I had any steady girlfriends or anything like that when I was in high school.

*Did you go to dances?*

Oh, yes. Sure. And you know, I had nice relationships with classmates in one thing or another and participated in the school activities in college.

*Going through your junior and high school years, did you have a group of kids . . . you went fishing or swimming in the ditches or anything like that?*

Yes, we swam in the ditches all summer in the canals. It was great. We had favorite swimming holes; they weren't always the same, but they were usually on these drops in the canal system where there would be a big area that would wash out, you know, and some turbulence to the water. And oh, that's the best thing we did. There were five or six of us that would get in a car with a guy that was old enough to drive and we'd go to a swimming hole and stay for three or four hours in the afternoon. So that was the best thing we did all summer.

*Was that boys and girls or just boys?*

Well, it was just boys that I went with. But usually, wherever the swimming hole was,

different children would come, boys and girls, you know, and swim.

*When kids were small, was that dangerous? Because you read so often about children drowning.*

I don't remember that we ever had much of a problem with that. That was a summer recreational thing. Kids around ranches, they'd start in their own ditches, dog paddling and that. I learned to swim out here in the Carson River, just west of Fallon—there was a family out there that I used to stay with, and they had some children.

*Some people that I interviewed tell me what fun it was ice-skating on the sloughs and ditches and canals.*

Yes. We did that to a certain extent in the winters when it was cold enough to freeze the ice. We had fun doing that. We'd have bonfires and roast marshmallows and do those things.

*Now, let's go back to school to your elementary. Do you remember any of your teachers in your elementary school?*

Yes. The one I remember mostly was Laura Mills, for whom the park was named. She was an excellent teacher, and I learned a lot in her classes.

*What made her so outstanding?*

Well, she was a very dedicated teacher. She was a pretty good disciplinarian. I don't even remember what courses she taught. But anyway, I remember that I thought she was a good teacher. I'll tell you, another teacher, and I don't remember her name, was

a penmanship teacher. She was very good. I don't know that I had the best penmanship involved, but what I do remember is some Indian girls that just wrote beautifully. They were from down here at the Stillwater Indian Reservation. And incidentally, speaking of Indians, when I was growing up I never had any feeling of any difference between Indian people and white people. They were just boys and girls that I knew, mostly from the Stillwater Indian Reservation. They didn't have any school down there at that time.

*So here there was no segregation of the Indian and the white?*

No. And as a matter of fact, I think they still basically attend the public schools from the reservation. They don't have separate schools.

*Most places have gone to the segregated schools.*

Yes, I know. But that wasn't the case here.

*What would the ratio be? About how many Indian kids . . . of course, your classes were small.*

Well, yes. Yes. I would say maybe ten percent. There were quite a few Indians down there as against the number of white people that were here. Of course, they had their own families.

*Just for the record, for people who aren't used to hearing of Indian and white kids, did they learn at the same pace as the other kids?*

Well, I felt they did. Yes. Some of them were very intelligent. And as I say, I remember that some of the best writers in the class were some of those Indian girls.

*Were there other ethnic groups through your elementary and through high school?*

Not much. No. There was only one black person that I remember growing up here, and that was a woman who did some housekeeping work in one thing or another. I can't remember, until later years, any black people in this community other than that woman. The Mexican people hadn't started to gravitate this far into the United States. You know, they were in Texas and New Mexico and California and Arizona and so on. But it was a later point in time that they began to gravitate this far away from the Mexican border.

*Now, I want to get back to high school again and I want to learn more about your developing leadership qualities.*

Well, I was never in athletics much. I broke my collarbone five times. And twice . . . once in high school football and once in basketball. I was really not that well coordinated as an athlete anyway. Athletics was not a forte with me. I got involved in high school debating, and I debated a lot. I mean, we debated with other high schools in competition. And I was a college debater. In high school, I also got involved in . . . I don't know, it was called the National Oratorical Contest or something like that which was clear across the country. As a senior, I won the Nevada competition, and I went to the . . . I think they called it the Pacific region. It involved several western states and Hawaii, and I took second in that competition. It was down in Royce Auditorium on the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] campus. Probably six thousand people. I became comfortable with that kind of thing. Because of that background . . . I guess you develop this over a period of time, an ability to speak extemporaneously, particularly if

you know what you are talking about. So, I was able to do that. That was one of my real fortes when I was in the Nevada Senate. I could really argue the point.

*Did you run for any office in high school?*

Oh, yes. I did. And I was defeated by Norma Jean Mills right at the end of the senior year as student body president. [laughter] She was a nice girl. I don't know whether they'd had a girl president earlier than that, or not. But anyway, when I was a senior, she out-voted me.

*Did you get involved with any school newspaper or anything?*

No.

*Did you do a lot of homework? Were you as serious a student then as you were later?*

Yes. I was, particularly in the math courses. The principal of the school was a great instructor, George McCracken. And I don't know whether anybody has ever mentioned him to you, but this guy was great. He was superb. He was also the debating coach.

He was the guy that trained me for this oratorical deal and went with me . . . he and his wife and my folks went together to that contest. He also taught geometry. I don't remember if he taught trigonometry. I think he taught algebra and geometry. He was an excellent teacher. Geometry wasn't one of my easiest subjects, but one of the things that we did which was kind of unique is, we developed sort of a competition in the class by illustrating geometrical diagrams in unique ways, and then below it was set out the formula for how you arrived at whatever



you arrived at. I can remember, for example, one that I made in the shape of a light bulb which spiraled around on the lower end and then the upper part. It got to be quite a thing because the kids got really involved in it and tried to have innovative ideas. When he took up the papers the next morning in the class, he'd always hold up some of these real unique things that kids were doing. It was great because it got them more involved in the subject matter than they ever would be otherwise, don't you see?

Anyway, that was basically about my high school experience. I got good grades. Not maybe exceptional, but anyway, I did my share of studying. I was graduated on my birthday, June eighth in 1932.

*Was there a celebration?*

No. At that time they didn't have these all-night parties for kids. It was a nice affair with parents and relatives. They always had a good speaker. They had it on the stage of the now junior high school, but they didn't have any special planned activities. It was a later point in time when they started doing this with kids, which was a good idea. But we never had, as I recall, we didn't have parties. Oh, we had proms.

*Did you take somebody?*

Well, yes. I wasn't that good of a dancer. [laughter] I finally learned to dance. I went with a girl that I went to the university with that was a pretty good dancer and I finally learned to dance. I went with her. [laughter]

*You took an older woman?*

Yes. Well, I mean at a later point in time when I was at the university.

*But at the high school did you . . . ?*

No, I'm not so good. I wasn't that sharp. [laughter]

*When you were finishing high school, had you started applying for colleges? Did you know what you wanted to do?*

Well, no, I never applied for colleges. I wanted to go to the university in Reno, and I think there might have been a couple of reasons. I was born there in Reno. I knew quite a lot about the university. And I was close to my folks. So, no, I don't think I made any decisions about going anywhere, and that was the only university in Nevada at the time. We didn't have UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas]. That was later. And so I don't think that I had to make any particular decision about that. I just figured I'd go up there and go to school, which is what I did.

*And so when you started there, did you live on campus?*

Yes. I joined the ATO [Alpha Tau Omega] fraternity. Pledged the fraternity that year, and lived in the fraternity house for four years.

*Were there other young men and women from your high school that went the same year you did?*

Yes. And some of them that joined the same fraternity.

*So it was a friendly atmosphere?*

Oh, yes. There were a lot of boys and girls that were going to the University of Nevada. And let me tell you another reason for that. Bear in mind, we were still in the Depression



at that time, and most families couldn't afford to send their children out of state.

*What were the expenses like to go there?*

Well, they weren't very heavy. The tuition had to be very low. The biggest cost I had was the cost of room and board at the fraternity which you would have anywhere. I don't remember what that was. And my folks . . . you know, as tight as money was, they always did well by me as far as supporting what I needed, including for social activities.

*So they would set it aside way ahead?*

Yes. Well, I don't know about that. But anyway, they made it available. My dad bought me a first Model B Ford coupe when it came out. I had just turned sixteen, I think, when I could get a driver's license, and he bought me this Ford coupe, and I loved that coupe. At that point, I was able to drive in the summertimes wherever I was going to work and have transportation available. I took that car to the university with me. Then later, he bought me another Ford coupe that I never will forget. It had first what they called jumbo tires on it, which were thin here and then widened out on the bottom. This was a real fancy coupe. Another boy from Fallon who was in the university and fraternity with me, Joe Wallace (his widow is the one that runs the Wallace Reality down here), and I went to a fraternity convention back in Memphis, Tennessee, and we drove that coupe. Then we took a big trip to the east coast in it. We were in forty-two states.

*Now what year of college were you when you did that?*

Oh, I don't know. I might have been a sophomore. I don't remember. Sophomore or junior.

*I want to back up just a little bit. When did you drive your first car; when did you first learn to drive?*

Well, when I got that car when I was sixteen, this coupe that my dad bought.

*You were sixteen when you got that, and that's the one that you took to college? Were you seventeen or eighteen when you went to college?*

Yes. I'll tell you what. I skipped two half grades, so I graduated when I was seventeen. In retrospect, that was a mistake. It's a mistake for kids to go to a college that young . . . a normal child.

*Not socially ready?*

Well, I'm not even sure they're intellectually ready. And the size of it was that I learned more in my senior year than I did the first three years combined. At that time, see, you could enter school when you were five. Later—and this was when I was in the legislature—we made the decision to increase that to six years old, and that's one of the best decisions we ever made. I think that it's so much easier for children when they go on to advanced education if they've got a little more maturity. I graduated in my school when I was seventeen years old having skipped two half grades.

*And did you come back summers and vacations?*

No, I worked on the highway jobs. Well, I might have been back in Fallon for a while, but if they had summer work, I went wherever it was. One year it was in the Las Vegas area. I spent the full summer down there. They had road work down there.

*As you were going through the university at Reno, what kind of subjects were you taking?*

I started in engineering and then I figured out pretty fast that wasn't my cup of tea, so I switched over to an arts and science course. I majored in economics and minored in philosophy. At that time, they didn't have a business school. I guess if I were going to do it today, I would have enrolled in the business school.

*So during those four years and with your father's kind of nudging you to go higher, when did you decide that you would go for a law degree and apply to Stanford?*

Well, I guess in my senior year I had to make the decision. And I told you earlier, I thought one day how many boys and girls would love to have that opportunity, and it would be wrong for me to pass it up, regardless of what I did in the future. I had never been down there, and I applied and I was accepted. Kind of an interesting thing, I got out a map and knew I had to go through San Francisco and then down the peninsula, and I had my second coupe. I was traveling alone. I didn't realize it until later, but I got into Stanford on a back road; [laughter] into Palo Alto, which was a city. Anyway, I finally got down to the campus and got enrolled.

*How did you feel?*

Well, you know, it was different. This was the first time that I was really taken off from home and into a new environment and a new experience, and it was a big challenge. As I told you, I made up my mind they weren't going to show me up. [laughter]

*Did you know anyone there?*

No, I didn't. As I told you, that was one of the reasons why I had no social relationships. Why all I did was study [laughter], which was good, you know. And after I got through the first year, of course, it became easier. And then I developed these good friends the senior year I was there. This best friend of mine . . . his mother and father were divorced, and his mother had rented a home there in Palo Alto while he was having his education. She was taking a worldwide trip that was going to take seven months, so he invited three of us to live with him and share the costs. It was a beautiful four bedroom . . . and she had beautiful furniture. We each had a bedroom and we lived like kings. We hired a black girl . . . she'd come in the afternoon about four and make up the beds and then she'd cook for us. Each week two of us would do the shopping, and then the next week, the other two would. We had our evening meals there. And it was just . . . it was just an ideal existence. You know, we all went our own ways studying. We had different courses and separate rooms. We didn't all attend the same classes or anything, so maybe we wouldn't see each other through the day.

Chuck Jonas, my friend, was an undergraduate there. As a matter of fact, the other two boys were too. They were undergraduates at Stanford. They knew a lot of friends, so we used to host social affairs and

then invite a lot of people. I can remember one time we were going to have a bunch of people in and so we were going to make our own punch, and we had a great big punch bowl and we put all this rum in the bowl and then we got a lot of juices of different kinds to dilute the rum taste. [laughs] I can remember us dumping these juices in to try to get some kind of a neutral taste to that rum. I don't know that we ever got the job done, but anyway, the rum was well accepted at the party—the rum punch. [laughter]

One of the things I remember about it was Hank Luisetti, who probably made a bigger impact on college basketball than anybody that ever lived. He came from the Mission District in San Francisco. He came to Stanford the same year that I came to law school. (He might have been a year earlier.) I was able to watch him play all three years I was there. He perfected the one-handed shot, and I can remember when I was a senior at the university and we'd listen to some of those ball games and he'd make thirty points, which was unbelievable at that time. I mean, it was big if a college basketball player could make twelve or fifteen points. And here was a guy making thirty points! And he was just a fantastic basketball player any way you take it. And the three years that he was there, they won the national championship every year. And one year the Stanford basketball team, the starting five, were the all-coast team—every player on there was the top player in the league in his position. The five of them were All Pacific Coast. They just had a wonderful program.

Well, I remember this party that I'm talking about—I had never had a chance to meet Hank Luisetti. He was a good friend of the fellow that owned the home, Chuck Jonas, so he came to the party, and I remember

having a nice visit with him; and boy, it was a great thing for me because he was just so unbelievable for his time. I think he made more of an impression on basketball than maybe anybody that ever played the game because of that one-hand shot deal. Before that, they'd get fixed positions and shoot with two hands, see. And he never played the game that way.

*As you were going through Stanford, you must have developed a lot more self-confidence and discovered some more qualities. So as you were graduating and looking inward, what are some of the things that changed during those four years?*

Well, it was three years. Some people were four-year students for one reason or another, because they hadn't completed their work in three. I went to one summer school session while I was down there, and I worked in a law office the second summer in San Francisco.

*Oh, as part of your program?*

Well, it was an elective thing if you wanted to do it, and I wanted to do that. So, I was not home in the summer either one of those two years.

First of all, let me tell you about the environment at Stanford. That was absolutely the most wonderful three years that I ever spent in my life. That was before they developed all the technology programs and leased all that Stanford ground. It was the first time I was ever in a place, having growing up in Nevada, where in the spring, it was like a green carpet. Just wonderful! And I used to get in my car and just drive around through those hills and enjoy that scenery. And the weather was beautiful. I can remember one

night my first year there when I was eating out, and I bought a newspaper before I went in to eat. I opened up the newspaper after I sat down, and there was a little box story on the front page—the night before it had been fifty-six degrees below zero in Elko, Nevada, and here I was, not even wearing an overcoat, you know, at sea level. So the climate was nice, and it was just . . . I'll tell you, I couldn't have been living in a more ideal environment. So, that contributed to the enjoyment of my whole experience there. Then living with these other friends my senior year was a nice experience. We've all remained good friends, and all attended my fiftieth class reunion down there in 1989. And we're all still alive. All four of us.

*And did it build a lot of new kinds of feelings of confidence in you?*

Well, you know, I don't know that you realize those things from day to day. They kind of evolve. One thing I can tell you that I did learn was good study habits. I learned how to concentrate and I learned things that were important. You know, I read just thousands of pages of material and took thousands of pages of notes. And so, you know, I guess the best experience in that way, besides the information I got out of the courses, was the study habits that I developed. The other thing is that particularly because of my experience at Stanford, I was able to organize my thoughts in a much more logical sequence. And in all of the things that I have ever written or ever spoken about since that point in time, I'd have to say that one of the big fortes I have is to be able to do that. And that is a result of the Stanford experience.

*So then graduation time came. What was it like?*

Graduation time came. It was wonderful.

*Did your family come up?*

Oh, yes. I told you, my dad had to come in a wheelchair. My mother and father were there. They have an open area amphitheater there called the Lawrence Frost Amphitheater. When I went down to Stanford it was under construction. A student named Lawrence Frost died while he was at Stanford, and his parents, in memory of him, gave the money to build this amphitheater. It was a beautiful outdoor amphitheater. It was all graduated so that, from the bottom of the amphitheater to the top, everybody had good views. Then they had a big raised platform area down at the bottom where we all sat as graduates and where the speakers sat, and it was a lovely day. It was just a nice experience. Of course, this was not just a graduation for the law class—this was the undergraduate school and all of the master's degrees and everything. I think I mentioned earlier that there were eighty-six of us started and there were thirty-six of us that finally graduated, and not all in the same class. Probably only thirty of us survived the attrition, whatever it was in that class.

*Because it was so tough?*

Yes. Or illnesses or some other reason that they couldn't graduate at that time.

*So that made your accomplishment even that much more significant?*

Yes. It was.

*I'm sure it was also mixed emotions because you were leaving this idyllic kind of life.*

Yes. Well, yes in a way. I came home. I had no idea of staying in California at that time. I came back to Nevada and my dad was still alive, and I came back because he and I were going to go forward together. After he died I was kind of adrift, and so I started to practice law. And of course, the war came on and I went into the Navy. After I got out, they wanted me to come down there, and I made the decision to stay in Nevada and not practice law because this was a small community. If I had really wanted to practice law, I would have had to move.

*Yes. And by then, despite the beauty of the greenery, this was home.*

Yes. This was home.

*Now, when we touch the war years we're not going to go into detail, because that won't fit into this. But all I want on those military years is just an overview of those years without much detail. And at that time, had you yet met your wife to be?*

No, I had not. I knew her.

*But not seriously.*

No, she was in high school in Reno when I was at the university. And she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen, but I did not know her. I was single when I went in the service, and I was glad in a way because I felt so sorry for people in the service that had wives and particularly children to be away from. Actually, the only person I had close to me at that time was my mother, and that was bad enough. My heart bled for these people. I was spared that kind of problem. I was about ready to be drafted in the army. And I didn't want to be a foot soldier, so this V7 program

for naval officer training was available. They called them ninety-day wonders—they just trained us for a short period of time.

You had to be a college graduate and you had to be under twenty-eight and single. I was twenty-seven. I enlisted in San Francisco in this V7 program and I was not called up for about seven months. I finally reported to Notre Dame University. They had a training program for twelve hundred of us. They had taken a portion of the campus, a cafeteria, a big exercise quadrangle and some dorms for us . . . put us four in a room. We were there for a month, and then the class split and six hundred of us went up to the city campus of Northwestern University where they had taken some of that facility, including a cafeteria, some living quarters, and some classrooms. We were there for three months. Then I was ordered to some gunnery training back in Norfolk, Virginia, then to a ship that was under construction in Oakland. That was the first ship that I went out on, and I was on that ship for twenty-three months before we came back to put another ship that was built in south San Francisco into commission. I finally left the Navy in November of 1945 after the war was over. I put in 175,000 miles at sea, and retired from the Navy as a full lieutenant senior grade. I was gone from July of 1942 until November of 1945.

*There must have been many changes. Can you tell us what it was like when you returned?*

Well, one of the significant changes that I found was a gradual thing, and I wouldn't have noticed it if I had been here, I guess: that was the improvements people were making on their own land on the project. Even though fuel was short . . . well, they had certain exemptions for fuel for agricultural use, so I'm not sure that they had a hardship that way. But



it was hard to get equipment and one thing or another. I was very much impressed with the work people had been doing on their own farmland to increase the on-farm efficiency of the use of water. Very much impressed with that. The other thing that I noticed, that I knew that was substantially different, was the buildup of the naval base.

*When you said you saw changes in the water use, can you give us more detail on that?*

Well, as I say, I could see where people had consolidated fields, improved their ditch systems like we had been doing at the Island Ranch, and creating better irrigation slopes. And I could just see lots of changes on fields as I drove to different parts of the valley.

*Was there a decrease or an increase in the population or businesses or of growth, or was this a slow period in Fallon?*

Well, I don't think there was a significant increase. The base was just in its early stages of expansion. Most of the population growth that was related to that came at a later point in time, after the war was over, because the war was not a good time for any kind of an expansion. People were pretty limited in what they could do, and with rationing of fuel and other types of things, there was a problem of getting materials where so much of it was commandeered by the military forces. So that was not a period of substantial change or expansion.

*From my research I understand that after the war there was a burst in the economy. Construction began again, and prices of beef and other farm products rose. Did you observe this burst of energy in the economy when you came back?*

Well, to an extent I did. Yes. After rationing stopped, and materials and equipment became more available, we surely noticed it in the construction business, which was pretty seriously restricted because of equipment acquisition during the war. Equipment was much easier to get. There was a lot of additional road work that had been delayed during the war that was resumed, which was helpful to the construction company. It was much easier to get labor and materials at the ranch.

*Now, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] was here during quite a lengthy period working on ditches and things that would affect the ranchers. Did you observe any of this personally or can you share any information about that?*

Well, I observed it. They were doing head gate work and diversion gate work all over the irrigation project, which was very helpful to the project. It gave them work, and I knew a lot of the people that were involved in that and some of the people that stayed here after they served that service. As a matter of fact, the person that owned a subdivision was a CCC boy. His name was Cecil Cheek. He owned this subdivision, and he came from the South somewhere. Not too well educated, but he became a pretty good builder. As a result of the work he had been doing with concrete and so on, he continued to do a lot of that kind of work after the war. He never became a licensed contractor, but he built his own home . . . he built these two homes right over here himself.

*Is he still alive?*

No, he's not alive. I knew a few of the people that stayed here after the war. Quite a few of them did.



*Really? Did they come into town? Did they mingle or did they work and go back to where they were housed? Do you know where that was?*

No, I do not. I do not remember that, and I don't know the extent to which they were absorbed into the community. A lot of them came, I know, from the poor part of the South. I never was that close to them, but I know a lot of the work that they did.

*Were there black fellows?*

I don't recall that. The people I knew who stayed here were Caucasians.

*Did the work that they did help your ranch at all?*

Well, it might have. I don't know. I guess everything helps on each canal delivery system. And we were on one of those canals. Now, I don't remember specifically too much of the work that was done right around that area of the ranch, but I'm sure there was a lot done on that particular delivery system that was helpful in the control of water and creating better efficiency and that sort of thing.

*When they put in the concrete, did that conserve the water that would have been absorbed?*

Oh, well, it created a lot better system of controlling the water through proper head gate or cross structures and that sort of thing. And gates that had a better control of the water. Before, there was a lot of leakage on a lot of those structures, probably a lot more washouts and that sort of thing, that the TCID had to repair.

*So that helped both the kids that needed work and the kind of work that was needed here.*

If the TCID had to do that work, I don't know, even then it would run into thousands of dollars.

*Would you please tell us about the steps before the naval air base came here?*

During the short period of time I was practicing law in Fallon after I got out . . . in an upstairs office in a building downtown on Maine Street. One day a man came into my office. He was one of the biggest men I had ever seen. He was not particularly fat, but that might have been a nine-foot ceiling and he was taking most of it. He was a big, broad man. He must have weighed three hundred pounds at least, but he was not fat. His name was Bob Schmidt. At that time, we had a Junior Chamber of Commerce organization made up of a bunch of young guys. We had quite a lot of energy, but no money. [laughs] I was the chairman. Somebody referred him to me. Pat McCarran was then the senior United States Senator from Nevada, and he had introduced the legislation that created the Civil Aeronautics Authority. He was the author of the bill. This guy was from an office down in Santa Monica. He came in and said he understood I was president of a Junior Chamber; then he said, "Pat McCarran sent me up here to locate a civil aeronautics field." And he said, "I need to find out whether there are any suitable locations here."

I said, "Well, I can show you a couple." So we got in the car and I took him out to where the present city airport is. Then I took him to the present site of the navy base. At that time, two local pilots had taken a patrol, and they bladed out along the west side of that area. That was a two-mile square area out there that had never been taken up for agricultural land. It belonged to the government, but it was in the custodial position of the Truckee-Carson

Irrigation District. It was bad land, and had never been taken up. They had bladed out a little runway north and south that they used. So, I took him out there and he looked at this runway and, he said, "This is a perfect location for a civil aeronautics airport." He said, "I'll let Pat know. You send all the information out that you need to take care of, and if you take care of it on your end, well, we'll get this thing going pretty soon." I began to get reams of stuff from Pat McCarran. [laughter] The things that he wanted, we were doing here. One of the things, we had to transfer the land from the custodial possession of the TCID to the Bureau of Land Management. It was all federal land. He took care of that part in Washington. And whatever he wanted, we took care of here in Fallon. The plans then were developed for the initial civil aeronautics runway out there.

Plans were received in Fallon by Dodge Construction, Inc., on the second day of July, 1942. I was going to get on a train in Hazen to report back to South Bend, Indiana, on the next day. Ernie Maupin was managing the construction company after both my uncle and dad died, and he and I drove out around this area where it was all staked out, and he had the plans. So that night he drove me to Hazen, and we flagged down the train that I could get to go back to South Bend. That was a military passage. I was feeling pretty bad because there was a big Fourth of July celebration the next day that I was going to miss, among other things [laughter], besides having to go away to war. Anyway, Dodge Construction got the contract for that original runway out there, and at a later point in time during the war, the Navy took it over. They did some major runway improvements. They had to—that little runway didn't cut it. Dodge Construction and Silver State Construction—which was A.D. Drumm,

who had a construction company here—had a joint bid and were awarded the contract for the original eight thousand foot military runway out there. I was gone in the Navy for twenty-three months. The interesting end of that story is that I came on one of the small aircraft carriers as a passenger from Honolulu into Alameda. I had a thirty-day leave to come home, and I got off the carrier and I went over to the Alameda Naval Air Station. I knew they were running a little flight back and forth daily for mail and that sort of thing from Alameda into Fallon, so I told them that I wanted to see if I could bum a ride with them to Fallon. About two hours later, they had this plane taking off and so we flew into Fallon, and I landed on a completed airport. I bummed a ride into town and the guy let me off at my mother's front door. She didn't even know I was home. I rapped on the front door, and I thought she was going to faint when she saw me. [laughter] That was the beginning of what became the ultimate naval air station. Now, they operated at that time as an auxiliary of Alameda, and they operated it for several years after the war; then they closed it down for a period of years. When they reopened it, they reopened it as a full naval air station of its own. The field is named after Bruce Van Voorhis, who was the only Nevadan, I think, that had gotten the Congressional Medal of Honor. I heard about it at sea. He took off on an absolute suicide mission. It was a bombing mission, and he volunteered, and he knew he was never going to have fuel enough to get back to his plane. He successfully completed the mission, and the plane crashed and killed him. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously, and they named the station after him later. The other sad part about that was that he had a younger brother by the name of Wayne Van Voorhis who had been a roommate of mine at the ATO house in

Reno. He was an officer in the ROTC unit up there and was a reserve army officer, and was called into the army and got involved at the death march at Bataan and died in the death march. And in the meantime, her husband passed away, so here was a poor woman who during the war lost her husband and both of her sons. I never grieved so much for a person in my life as I did for that woman. Anyway, that's the basic history of the base.

*So, you landed on the runway that your company built?*

No, the one that Silver State Construction and Dodge built together, which was the major eight thousand foot runway at the base at that time.

*Now, you were away during a part of that building, but when you returned . . . . Tell me how this base coming in affected the town. I understand there was a controversy. Was there?*

Well, I don't know that there was. It was not really at that point a large operation. When it was operated as an auxiliary to Alameda, they had squadrons up here doing some training, but it was pretty basic and not nearly the magnitude of what it has grown into in more recent years. It was pretty small. They did close it down, you see, for a few years before they reactivated it to create an independent station out of it.

*Do you know when they started to buy out some of the homesteads and take over some of the range land?*

That was after they had reopened it as an independent air station, and where they wanted a safety cushion around the airfield and the facilities, at a later point in time. I

remember the buy outs and remember a lot of the people that were involved, and some of them bought properties in other parts of the valley. They were well compensated. They felt very good about the kind of prices they got from the Navy.

*So they were able to get new places?*

Yes.

*But in one interview . . . one or two people were saying graze land that wasn't theirs, that they used for their animals, wasn't available. Was there much of a problem with that?*

No, there wasn't. There was a pasture ranch and it was on marginal land. It wouldn't raise anything but a little pasture feed. And down south of the base, that was acquired as part of that safety cushion because it was right at the end of the runway. That's the reason they bought it. The runway was a north-south runway and this was to the south of it. They acquired it and there was a pretty good home on it. It had been built by a man by the name of May . . . not the May Company, but another May from the Los Angeles area. And he put a nice home on it. After they acquired it, it became the commanding officer's quarters and still is. But that was a marginal piece of property. Ran a few cattle, but it was nothing major. And it was not part of the general grazing areas and public domain grazing areas.

*I imagine that it helped the economy greatly to have that built here.*

Oh, sure it has. It has had more of an impact all the time as it's gotten larger and a lot more people involved. You know, it's growing, but the growth was a little slow early on. For one thing, the secret to this station

and what will determine its role in the future is it's probably one of the few places in the free world that has that big an air corridor that they could train on. It goes clear out past Austin, over 120 miles. They got that air corridor that they can use for their training that I don't think you can develop anywhere in the free world anymore, you know, because of complaints and environmental considerations and all of those things. I can tell you this, and I've heard it from secretaries of the Navy, from admirals in the Navy, and everybody else—this is going to be the most important training station that the Navy has in this country.

*Well, I know that Miramar is closed, and that Top Gun is all moving here. Have they started the move yet?*

No, they haven't. They're in the process of building some facilities to accommodate them. There was an article just recently in the paper about a fifty million dollar program just under construction. A few years ago, they had a big hassle about buying this land in Dixie Valley, which was part of an air corridor that they were using for some electronic warfare training just south of Dixie Valley out by Frenchman's Flat. They've got over a hundred million dollars invested out there in just electronic tracking equipment. Anyway, there was a big hassle about the buy out there and about these guys weren't getting enough money for their land and all that sort of thing. Well, they finally got them pretty well all bought out. And that helped the Navy as far as being able to fully utilize this area where they do their strategic training and their air combat and all that sort of thing. They are able to measure accuracy and some amazing . . .

*Was it after they got that corridor that they knew they could bring in the Miramar Top Gun?*

Yes. During that time, the hassle over Dixie, they had a morning meeting over here at the convention center when a bunch of admirals was out here with then Secretary of the Navy. And the reason they were out here was to develop a training agenda for the Strike Warfare University that they created at the base. I don't know whether you know anything about the Strike Warfare University. After the attack on Libya, they found out that the squadron leaders weren't as sharp as they thought they should have been. So the Navy decided they were going to set up refresher training for squadron leaders. The Secretary of the Navy was talking about this deal that morning. He said, "We asked all the top people in the naval air force, admirals and so on, where this should be located, and over ninety percent of them said Fallon." And so the Strike Warfare University, one of the recent developments, is housed in a separate building.

*What year did they start that, or approximately how long ago?*

Oh, I think it's probably been eight years ago or something like that. They have people coming and going all the time. That's an independent command. It's a training facility for this purpose. The other important thing that I found out the last time I was out there, the "All Nav" [All Navy Bulletin] dealing with tactics and strategy and improvements in techniques in aerial fighting are being sent out of the Strike Warfare University for the whole Navy. So there's no question in my mind that as long as they have carriers at sea, this base is going to be a very active place.

*The new technology in war.*

Yes, and it will continue to improve with the training programs they have here.

*When I was giving oral history workshops at the Churchill County Museum, I met some wives of contractors who worked at the base. They had five-year contracts and moved to Fallon, and some of the wives volunteered at the museum. Did you notice a gradual increase in the kinds of people coming who worked for the base?*

Oh, yes. Yes. Ford Aerospace, and I don't know who else is involved. But see, a lot of those people are involved with this tracking equipment out there. Scientific people, and they're high paid people.

*High paid? And are they here long enough to interact with the community?*

Well, I can't respond to that too much. The Navy League is an organization that a lot of those people belong to, along with people in the community, but I couldn't comment on that too much because I don't know.

*Are there enough rentals for these people? Does the military put up housing?*

The military has got a lot of housing and are extending that. And that's an area right out west of the base there.

*Now, do these people purchase more things at the base, or do they use the businesses in town?*

Well, I think they use them to a certain extent. I remember talking to the people over here at Raley's, which is an enormous store, incidentally—64,000 square feet in a community like this. At the time it was built, I think it was the largest store that Raley's had built. It's a beautiful store. And they were complaining that they didn't really benefit that much from Navy operations wherever they were. So they do have their own . . .

*Commissary and Post Exchange?*

Yes. Yes. And even retired military people here have that available to them. And they do have special prices.

*Do they have a gas station out on the base, too, or . . . ?*

Oh, I don't think so. I don't think they handle everything. And so I think there's still a certain amount of spillover as far as what they require here in the community.

*Has the population of Fallon grown a whole lot?*

Oh, yes. When I went into the senate, which was in 1958, I think there were about 6200 people in the community. And each decennial it's grown. I think probably the population is around twenty thousand in the county.

*A lot of retired, aren't there?*

Yes. They're rural dwellers is what they are. They want a little country place. I told you when my dad came here and he came through, he thought Fallon was a nice desert oasis. And that's what people still think. They like a little stake in the land where they can have a few animals and a few trees, a little pasture.

*It's lovely. Did it create an increase in the value of property, the land, an increase in the prices of the ranches?*

It did on the smaller acreage, you know, like a twenty or a forty-acre parcel. On larger acreage like the Island Ranch, no. Those are strictly agriculture acreage. They're not interested in farming, those kind of people; they're just rural dwellers.



*Has it increased, though, the smaller rentals in homes, like in your area?*

Oh, I'm sure it has. Yes, and on smaller parcels, the land here anymore, the prices per acre are significantly higher because people can afford to pay more now. For example, the Island Ranch today is appraised at about \$2,000 an acre, without improvements. A nice twenty-acre parcel might be worth \$3500 to \$4000; a forty-acre parcel, \$3,000 per acre. Because the guy, if he's got the assets, can buy forty acres for, say \$120,000, and build a little home on it, and even with improvements, he's not in it for too much money. But on commercial operations, those values have not changed.

*Has there been an increase in the businesses in town with an increase in the population?*

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

*I've observed one of the places where there are lots of little "Mom and Pop" operations; individually owned places. Is that changing, or are more small places becoming specialized?*

Well, yes. I see it all the time. You bet. You know, as the population grows, those things are going to happen. And one of the things that really ignited it was when we built the shopping center out here. There wasn't much along that strip. At the time that I acquired it, that land was in bankruptcy, and there were no utilities out there: no water, sewers, electricity, nothing. That was in the early 1970s or maybe the late 1960s. We formed an assessment district up here along the highway on the south side to put those utilities in. There were some other property owners in there. The assessment district went to Allen Road, which is the corner of

the shopping center there. So the water and power and sewer went in, and that's what permitted the development. The population each decennial has gradually increased . . . I think it's increased more in this decennial percentage-wise than it ever has, because I think there's an accelerated growth here population-wise.

*And is the increase in people retiring here due to all the problems there are in places like California, or is it due to the military presence?*

Yes. It's largely an increase in the population for whatever the reasons, and that's one of the principal reasons. But, as the population grows, as in any community, you begin to see new service supporting businesses spring up, don't you? So that's the history of any community. It's no different here.

*But the radical increase? Do you think more and more people have seen bad economy, high prices, taxes, crime, violence, and gun use as some of the causes for a stronger movement away from California and other highly populated areas?*

Yes, I do. I sure do.

*So, to get back to finish with the military: did that influence your farm? Does the military buy their food supplies from the local ranches?*

No, they do not. I've told you that this is not a row crop area. The people aren't eating alfalfa or small grain. And the dairies, I don't think that's as big a factor here because nearly all of this milk is shipped out of here to processing plants either in Reno or in California. So the finished product has to come back in here.



*This is not a beef cattle area?*

No. It's a range area, out on the range. Hammy [Ira Kent] can tell you more about that. But there's a lot of dairies in here now. The last figure I saw was about 8,000 head of dairy cattle here in this valley. And they consume a lot of this local hay. Cows eat their weight every month, so if a cow weighs fifteen hundred pounds, she'll eat that much feed every month. Well, that's about nine tons per year that a cow eats. So, if you have six thousand milking cows (even dry cows eat about the same) if they eat nine tons apiece, that's 54,000 tons of feed that the local dairy cows will consume of hay. Not all of it here in the valley, because they ship in some high test hay that can't be grown here at some higher elevations.

*Let's discuss your long years of public service. Let's start first with your role on the board of trustees of the Churchill County School District.*

In 1955, the legislature passed a piece of legislation which said that when a school district reached twelve hundred students, the school board would be expanded from five to seven members. One night following that, about eleven o'clock at night, I got a call from the chairman of the school board. (That would have been in the fall of 1955.) He said that they had reached that point in enrollment and they needed to appoint two members to the school board on an interim basis, and he wanted to know whether I would be willing to serve. I didn't have any reason not to, so I told him I would do it. That's how I first got involved in any public activity. I then ran the next election for the school board. Ken Tedford was the other person appointed. He is still alive here. So, he and I both filed and ran for short terms,

two years. We were unopposed, but we both got a very good complimentary vote. He got about fifty votes more than I did, but they were good votes. And I think that's what encouraged me to get into competitive elections. My dad always told me that I needed to be careful about my own personal conduct because there were a lot of people in the community that were jealous of the fact that we had four or five ranch properties and the construction business. So I had no idea, up to this point, about how I, as an individual, might be received in the community. On the basis of that good complimentary vote in that election, I decided in 1958 that I would run for the state senate. I didn't have any what I would call extraordinary experiences on the school board—I was finally chairman of the school board, and I enjoyed the service—but it encouraged me to run for the senate.

I want to go back a little on that. In 1941, just before the war, after I got out of Stanford Law School, I went over to the first session of legislature. I went over there two or three times. I was always fascinated by legislative process; I'd talk with the senators; they were a lot of very colorful people. I made up in my mind in 1941 that someday I wanted to try to be in the senate. In 1958 I decided that I was going to run for the senate. The person who had been in the assembly for many years, Eric Palludan, whose voting record I liked very much, was well regarded in the community and I didn't know whether I could beat him or not. But he made the mistake of just campaigning out of his business time. [laughter] He had a mercantile business downtown, and he never got out to personally contact the voters. I covered practically every residence in Fallon. I beat him two to one.

*Did you have a group of supporters helping you do that?*

No. No. I did that pretty much by myself, because at that time I hadn't been involved in politics; but I did get support from the community. I didn't have any particular program. People knew that I had been educated as an attorney, and they knew I'd been active in the community—I guess they just judged me for whatever experiences I'd had here at that point in time. I didn't really have anything in the way of governmental background from which to base a campaign at that point in time, other than just serving on the school board.

*Tell me, as you were watching the results, how you felt and where you were and . . .*

Well, they counted the ballots down at the county clerk's office in the court house, so people would just go down there and, you know, they were . . .

*You didn't have a group of your family and supporters together the way it is today?*

No. It was a small community. In later times, of course, it was different.

*And you were a young man?*

I was forty-three when I was elected.

*Your whole life changed?*

Well, it did in a way. The sessions at that time were a lot shorter than they were in later years. And they were biannual sessions in Nevada, not annual sessions, so the legislature was not in session every year. The Republicans were in control when I was first in the senate and I became chairman of some of the committees. One of the early things that happened to me is . . . At that time the

licensing of motor vehicles in Nevada was done in the counties. It was not centralized. And so we were trying to set up a centralized system. The transportation committee in the senate was handling that type of legislation. We had some problems with some legislation that we originally passed (which I was not involved in as a committee person), being ruled unconstitutional. Governor Grant Sawyer came into that particular session in 1963 and said that the biggest challenge the legislature had was to try to get the motor vehicle legislation straightened around. So the Republicans asked me to chair that committee, and I didn't have the benefit of the background of what had happened on earlier legislation. So I told them I would do it as long as they didn't expect me to be in any other committee meetings for thirty days. I said, "Give me thirty days, and I'll work on it all the time and see if we can't find a solution to the problems that existed," which I did. I didn't attend any other committee meetings, but whenever we weren't in session I was doing background work on this piece of legislation. The end result was that we developed a plan . . . that was in the early days of computerization. We developed a plan for a centralized, computerized, mail-in motor vehicle registration system. The problem before was that in these counties, people were standing in lines to register their vehicles. You'd go up and they'd have to type all the stuff. It was a horrible inconvenience for the public. Then we had some other aspects of the legislation that needed to be addressed, and the end result was that we developed a real good piece of legislation and it's really worked. It was tooled to the future.

The principal opponent of the legislation was the assessor down in Clark County. It was in the assessor's office where vehicle registration was handled, and he had a little

political machine of his own. He had fifty clerks down there that were doing all this business, so he kept throwing up smoke screens about this legislation. We passed it in the senate and sent it over the assembly. This was my first contact on any legislation with a person who I feel that was the best legislator Nevada ever had, a man named Jim Gibson from Henderson. He came to me when the bill was over in the assembly. He was from Clark County, and a lot of these Clark County legislators were wondering, you know, how to vote on this, because the assessor had been campaigning against it. Jim knew nothing about the legislation. He asked me more penetrating questions about that piece of legislation than anybody asked me. I couldn't believe the depth of this man's analysis of that bill. And so anyway, after I responded to him, he said, "Well, you know, it's important for me to know what I should do because there's another four votes in here depending on my judgment of what we should do. Do you see any weaknesses anywhere in the legislation?"

I said, "No, Jim, I don't, I think it's going to work and I don't see a defect in it anywhere." So, as a result, the bill was passed. That was in 1963, and that was one of the landmark pieces of legislation which I was involved in. Normally, there wouldn't be any public knowledge of the importance of it, but the size of it was that . . . it was a system that would handle any numbers of vehicles through this computerized, centralized system. Anymore, why all people have to do when they get their notices of renewal is just mail them back in and they get their renewals.

*I can see a big benefit in isolated counties, because for some it's a long hard trip to get to the assessor's office.*

Well, not only that, but imagine these people sitting at typewriters manually doing these things. That was before the time of computers pretty much. Anyway, that was in my opinion one of the best pieces of legislation that I ever worked on successfully.

*I want to bring you back to when you first started. You went to Carson City and lived there every other year for how long a period of time? Where did you stay, and did Betty go with you?*

Well, that's a good question. At the time, the sessions were lasting maybe ninety to a hundred days, and our children were still in school here. I commuted, driving back and forth because I didn't want to be staying in a motel room by myself over there. And the other thing, the committee demands and that sort of thing were not that intense at that time. And so I could leave here at seven or seven-thirty in the morning, have a committee meeting at nine, and get away from there by four-thirty or five in the afternoon. So until the time that our children got out of school, I commuted. Rarely did I have to stay overnight; and after that, Betty and I rented an apartment. We rented half of a duplex for years, and the children were away at school, so as the demands got greater, it just worked out to stay in Carson during the sessions and come home on the weekends. So, it worked out fine, and we enjoyed the social affairs and . . .

*Tell me more about the activities of the senate while you were senator—issues that were raised related to Churchill County, especially if there's anything that relates to the water issue, the land issue, or Lahontan Dam.*

There were hardly any issues at the time, as far as problems with government and the

Bureau of Reclamation and so on that we are experiencing now. But one thing that did develop that I could foresee, fortunately, was the plan to transfer water rights. The Bureau of Reclamation took the position that they had to approve the transfer. If you wanted to move water rights from here to somebody else's piece of land, or an adjoining piece of land, you had to get approval from the Bureau of Reclamation. I thought that, sooner or later, it would be determined that the state water engineer would have that authority. So in the session of 1979, the last session that I was in the senate, I wanted to try to get a piece of legislation passed that would give the local boards, like the TCID board, some authority over these transfers. We had what we called the Irrigation District Act in Nevada, and there were three irrigation districts in Nevada—one in the Yerington area, this one, and one in Lovelock. So I went to all the irrigation district boards before the session and got their support for a piece of legislation which said that before the state engineer could transfer any water rights, there'd have to be an approval by the local irrigation district board. I had the state engineer's support on this, because he was looking for guidelines in administering anything as to water. So he went to the hearing with me, and the district attorney from Carson City showed up at the hearing (this was in the senate) and objected on the basis that he didn't think anybody should have a veto authority over something like that.

The people that were on the senate committee at that time were not really that knowledgeable or conversant about agricultural water rights. They were more impressed by what the district attorney said than what we were trying to do, so I wasn't getting any support for that bill. I only had

one other person there who was trying to do something with it, but he couldn't generate any interest with anybody else. One night I woke up in the middle of the night, and I thought about a different way to approach it; and that was with a piece of legislation that said the state engineer would not change the manner or place of use of the water if it resulted in a lower efficiency of water delivery or resulted in a higher cost to the remaining water users. The next morning I called the state engineer, Roland Westergard, and said, "I think we can accomplish what we want this way."

And he said, "Well, I agree with you."

I then drafted a second bill and then I went and spent an hour with the district attorney in Carson City pleading with him not to oppose this piece of legislation. He never said, yes or no and I didn't know when I left whether he was going to come in on that; but he never showed up, so I got that bill passed. And the interesting sequel is that the United States, after they started buying water rights in here, was trying to get around having to pay the O & M [Operation and Maintenance] annual charges, because if they didn't pay the O & M charges on the water rights they bought, then that would reduce the financial ability of the district to operate, and they have a lot of fixed costs out there.

The bill passed in 1979, the last session. Then the next year, at the Alpine decree on the Carson river, a federal judge was asked to rule about who had the authority on these transfers. He ruled that the state engineer had the authority. Later on, when the government started buying these water rights, they'd send them over to the state engineer and he wasn't doing anything with them. Finally, after about three years, they caved in and they're now in

a forty-year contract to pay their share of the O & M costs. [laughter] So, I think that's a wonderful piece of legislation.

*What a satisfaction. Before we go into other issues on the senate, while you were in the senate were you still managing your businesses here?*

Yes, I was.

*So, you were carrying a couple of hats during that time?*

Yes. I was. Because as I told you, I was home on weekends.

*Yes. Also it was only every other year. Did it start to come every year?*

No, no, no. It's never been on an annual basis. We've had a few special sessions in Nevada in the off years, but they're special sessions. They're not regular. But I was home on the weekends, and I had a foreman at the Island Ranch. If I hadn't had him, I couldn't have served over there. But I did, and I was home on the weekends, and he and I would plan what we wanted to do. The work with the construction company didn't interfere at that point in time necessarily with my serving over there.

*Tell me more about the senate when you served.*

After reapportionment, the one man, one vote . . . We had one senator for each county prior to that, regardless of population. One of the widest disparities in America was here in Nevada. Storey County, with Virginia City, had about seven hundred people and one state senator, and Clark County had about 225,000 at that time, represented by one senator.

[laughter] After reapportionment, Clark County had a majority of the population and it's been growing. Now they have about sixty-five percent of all the population in Nevada down there. Then they had a lot of senators and assemblymen from Southern Nevada. It was a Democratic county, and, in general, the Democrats had been in control of the legislature ever since that time. So I got into a minority position politically, as far as committee chairmanships and that sort of thing, which was all right.

I worked on important committees. Well, anyway, I always served on the judiciary committee, having a legal background; and on government affairs, which was an extremely important committee in the senate; and usually on taxation. So, over the years that I was in the senate, which was twenty-three years, I literally got involved in thousands, absolutely thousands of pieces of legislation. But it was all very interesting, and I tried to make my contributions in the committees, which I think I did. And I just enjoyed the process.

In 1955, in the same piece of legislation which spoke about expanding the school boards, a different formula was adopted for public education in Nevada. It was done by Peabody State Teacher's College. (Don't ask me where that is.) But anyway, these people supposedly knew a lot about school formulas. In the early 1960s, we begin to find out that this formula was not working, because we were having to make special grants to certain school districts which just simply didn't have enough money to operate on. The legislature, in 1963, appointed an interim committee to review the school formulas. That's when the Republicans were still in control in the senate, and I was asked to chair that interim committee. The committee was comprised of legislators and educators, and I think there



might have been maybe a dozen people or so on that committee. We had several meetings during the interim, between sessions.

It became obvious to me, finally, that politically we could never make substantial changes in that formula without additional revenues, because for every winner on the present revenue base, there were going to be some losers. You know, it was just slice the pie a different way. Some people would get more and some less. And you could never get the political support of the people who got less.

I went back in the 1965 session and reported to the legislature that I thought they ought to continue the interim review, but that I felt that what we were going to have to do is try to develop an additional source of revenue so that nobody would be a loser. The challenge was, where to get that money? Anyway, when I would drive across these long stretches of Nevada [between Carson City and Fallon] highway by myself, all I'd think about was how I could put that deal together. Hours and hours and hours I'd think about that. I finally began to piece together an idea of how to do it. At that time we had a two percent state sales tax, so I developed the idea of what I call the local school support tax, which originally was proposed as one percent. It was a sales tax, but it was not part of the state deal because it sought a different origin. It didn't go into the state general fund, it went back to the school districts.

Fortunately, in Nevada, the school districts, by virtue of the 1955 legislation, became coterminous with the counties. Like here, we had a lot of little rural school districts, but in 1955 they were all consolidated into the one Churchill County School District.

The interesting thing about this was, it made the sales tax feasible because you could account for it accurately, don't you see? Because at that time, each county was

reporting the sales taxes to the state. And, where the school districts encompassed the same area, it was easy enough to determine the allocation that should go back to the schools. For example, at that point in time, the two percent sales tax was raising about twenty-four million dollars a year. So it was easy to figure that the one percent tax was going to raise, at that point in time, twelve million . . . half of the \$24,000,000 budget. So, that was the premise upon which I figured the additional revenue. I got a man to work with me the last few months just before the 1967 session.

The other thing I thought we needed to do was to conduct an interim study to see if the gaming industry could stand an increase in taxes. We conducted the study and the answer was yes, so part of that would go into the general fund of the state of Nevada. Then we could process this one sample of a school support tax. So, I introduced a bill to increase the gaming tax by twenty percent. There's two or three different taxes on gaming. There's a slot tax and there's a gross revenue tax, but the net result would be a twenty percent increase in the revenues on gaming. I also introduced a bill for Paul Laxalt, who was the new governor. It was also at about a twenty percent level, but a little different breakdown on how the revenue would be produced. So we had those two gaming tax bills in, and then I introduced my school support bill and we put it in the taxation committee. We agreed that we'd just let that bill sit until we got the gaming tax passed and signed by the governor.

There wasn't much said about my bill early on, and we hadn't taken any committee action. This is an interesting, personal situation: One of my good, close friends, Mahlon Brown, he represented Clark County's 225,000 people. He had been a justice of the peace down there and he was an attorney. He was a wonderful



guy. So he's on a taxation committee and he was pretty sympathetic to the gaming industry, and he was trying to hold their tax to twelve percent. Jim Gibson was the chairman of this committee—he'd come over to the senate from the assembly. We had a late afternoon meeting of the taxation committee in a little meeting room off the senate chamber, upstairs in the Capitol building, to consider the increase in the gaming tax. "Well," he said, "I would support a twenty percent increase. Maybe I'll just take a poll of the committee and see how all of you feel." He took a poll of the members around the table, starting on his left. Coe Swobe said yes to the increase. Joy Christensen said he hadn't made up his mind, and this was sixty days into the legislative session. When it got around to the right side of the table, Mahlon Brown asked me if he supported the 20 percent increase in the gaming tax, would I support the school tax? While I had authored the school tax, I had never committed to vote for it. At that point I did commit to support it, even though my own Churchill County School District was not in significant financial trouble. So Mahlon and I agreed to support both tax measures.

We passed the gaming tax bill out of committee that night. This was about seventy days into the legislative session. After the meeting, Joy Christensen went out to his desk in the senate chamber. I went over to him and I said, "Joy, these things aren't easy, but this is no time for a faint heart."

He said, "I know it, but I got a faint heart."  
[laughter]

So the committee voted a "do pass and bring it to floor." [Do pass = a committee recommendation to pass and enact the legislation.] Don Perry was working with me, and he got it to the floor. Then the senate called itself into a committee of the whole

and asked me to explain the bill to the senate. It had no publicity, so I did. I responded to questions, and finally somebody asked me if I could see any weaknesses in the bill. I said, "Yes, there's one. I don't actually know how to handle this. I had to take the historical cost base in each school district as I found it. And, assuming there are inequities, the cost base does not necessarily correct those. I don't know exactly how to correct it." Lo and behold, the guy who was then handling the financial work for the state department of education had been working on this deal. This guy's name was Lincoln Liston. He had come out of the Clark County School District. He was their financial guy and he came to the state department. I knew him, but I didn't know he was working on it. He gets up and he says, "Well, I've been following this piece of legislation, and I have done some work that I think addresses the inequities." What he did is very simple. We had a column of state support for each school district that was just expressed in dollars. He had another list. The committee of the whole amended the bill and put in his figures. I don't remember if it was that day . . . I don't think it was, because then we scheduled it for a final vote within a day or so. The bill passed. We had twenty senators at that time, and the bill passed thirteen to seven. I had not lobbied the bill with anybody, and about ten minutes later I got a call from Laxalt's office and he wanted to see me. I went down and he threw his arms around me. It was his first session. He had not authored it and he knew he was home free between the gaming tax and this local school support tax. The interesting thing is I had been with him earlier . . . I was flying with him to Las Vegas one night, this was in December, when I had this thing pretty well put together. (He had been elected in November.) I was explaining this to him and he wasn't savvying it at all.

I think he thought I was smoking opium. [laughter]

Then the bill went over to the assembly, and that was the only time that I was ever invited over there to address a piece of legislation. And that was a committee of the whole of the assembly. So we spent an hour, an hour and a half or so, explaining the bill over there, and they passed it by a larger majority than we did in the senate.

Then the attorney general at that time—he was a nice guy, but he wasn't the most brilliant lawyer that ever came along—was asked by the senate whether it was constitutional, and he said it wasn't; that it was a violation of the state two percent sales tax. Any change had to be approved by the people. We won't go into that reason, but that was the case. I'd researched that earlier, and that was the first thing that they tried to find out. We had a real good bill drafter, a good constitutional lawyer, Frank Daykin, and he concluded that the local school tax was constitutional. I always felt it was constitutional, primarily because the money sought a different destination—it did not go to the state general fund; it went back to the school districts.

The attorney general in Nevada is constitutionally charged with defending executed pieces of legislation in the legislature, so this guy had gotten himself in a difficult position, because he'd already said it was unconstitutional. So he appointed Daykin and the chief of the division, Russ McDonald, who was a Rhodes scholar at the University of Nevada and went on as the attorney to represent him in the hearing before the supreme court, about the constitutionality. I had gone to the chief justice of the supreme court in May sometime, and we passed the bill . . . maybe before the middle of May. I told him, "We need to have a ruling on the constitutionality of this bill before

July 1, because it would be a disaster if we implemented it and then found that it was unconstitutional. I would appreciate it if you could give it an early consideration."

He said, "We'll do it."

So, it went over to the supreme court, and they set a hearing within a couple of weeks after that. Harvey Dickerson, the attorney general, found himself in a position where he had already made his own ruling. We appointed two guys from the legislature as our attorneys to represent him in the hearing. The court ruled, two to one, that it was a valid piece of legislation. The other judge said it was a violation of the state two percent law. The next day some reporter asked Dickerson what his reaction was. He said, "Well, one judge and I held it was unconstitutional, and the other two said it was constitutional, so it was a Mexican standoff." [laughter] We got by the legal hurdle and it became a law.

*And I hear it was also named the "Dodge Law."*

Yes, it was. And there was another piece of legislation which has always borne my name, which I'm going to talk about, that was in the next session. So, that's the story of the school support act. The sequel is that in 1989 I was given a Hall of Fame award by Junior Achievement of Northern Nevada. I wanted to find out what the performance of that formula had been over the years in Nevada, because it was enacted in 1967. We were talking about 1989, twenty-two years later, so I got ahold of the head of the research division in the legislature and I asked him if he had any information recently about how this formula compared in the United States with other formulas. They sent me some information, the latest of which was that in 1986 there had been a national review of all the states on the formulas. They took three different

approaches in determining the equity of state formulas . . . equal dollars behind each student. And Nevada was number one, after over twenty years—number one in America on two of the formulas and number six on the third.

Now, the beauty of this piece of legislation is that it was a moving formula. It needed to be reviewed every session for its equity, and there are two changing conditions in the school district that could affect their costs. One is the tax revenue, whether it's up or down. For example, in the mining counties in Nevada, it was either chicken or feathers. They'd have a lot of revenues when mines were operating and then nothing. So, the revenue base changed. The other factor was the per pupil cost. I had determined early on that where you consolidate students in an urban area and have completely full classrooms, you minimize your cost per students. In Elko County—a big county with very cold winters, where they had a lot of little country schools, and each teacher was serving a handful of kids—the costs are higher in a county like that. So this formula will work forever if it's properly administered, because it will always be taking into consideration the changes in each school district's revenue base and in its cost base.

*If the revenue is way down, then do they get funding from another source?*

From the state, out of the state distributive school fund. This was the whole purpose of that state distributive school fund. That was the equalizer for school districts, don't you see? Where they didn't have a local ability. Later, Linc Liston told me that with the old formula it used to take one person six weeks to make the quarterly allocations to school district. With this formula, it took him four hours.

*This Junior Achievement Hall of Fame award was specifically for that?*

No. Just in recognition of my public service. But this was the highlight, really, of my public service. My own university [University of Nevada, Reno] in 1981 gave me an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree in recognition of my public service. That's pretty much the story, and I'm so gratified that I had the ability and the dedication to get that job done. That's by far the most important thing I could ever do for this state.

In that same session of 1967, there was a piece of legislation which was enacted which in effect set up bargaining rights for firemen in Nevada. Up to that point in time, there was no legislation which mandated collective bargaining. This was the first bill that surfaced with enough support to pass. It was passed by the legislature, but I argued against the bill on the basis that, if we were going to do something like this, we should not be singling out firemen, you know. It should also apply to other local governmental employees. So anyway, Paul Laxalt vetoed the bill for the same reason that I argued. He said, "Look, if we're going to get into collective bargaining, let's do it for other people besides firemen." What was happening is the school, particularly the education lobby, was gearing up to get in the act, particularly after this bill had gotten that much support. And I knew in 1969 that this stuff was coming, that other groups were becoming involved. We'd had some problems with a piece of education legislation that every teacher in Nevada must have gotten in their two bits worth, and it was a horrible piece of legislation. Just horrible. You know, it was just a disjointed piece of legislation. There was too many different ideas, some of which weren't even consistent. I think this was back maybe in 1965 or so. But I

could see this sort of thing coming in Nevada, and I thought, “Well, rather than to have to work with a bad piece of legislation coming in, if in fact something like this is going to be supported, I’m going to work for a piece of legislation that’s got some consistency.”

*And what year was this?*

That would have been in 1968. Collective bargaining for governmental employees was developing nationwide. The education commission of the states had a meeting on this subject in Denver. And at my own expense and time, I went to this meeting. I was trying to gather ideas about how to put a bill together, and there were some very interesting discussions. But the best thing I did was to spend about an hour with a guy who had been the chief school officer in the state of New York. He later became the United States Commissioner for Education and while serving in that job, he was killed in an airplane accident. I’d researched it, and I found that they had a piece of legislation in the state of New York that involved only teachers. So I knew he knew quite a lot about it, from his own experience. He gave me some thoughts and precautions. When I came back, this was in the summer of 1968, I started working with Frank Daykin in the legislature. He has a good legal mind. He had researched the whole country, and at that point in time, there was not an all-encompassing piece of legislation here. In Canada, and some other places, there was legislation for firemen and policemen. In some places, there were some pieces of legislation for teachers, but nothing that was an all-encompassing piece of legislation. So, we put together a piece of legislation that covered all local government employees—counties, cities, school districts, and so on—but I could never figure out how to include state employees. I

would have, except that in Nevada at least, and I think it’s true in most states, they really have to bargain directly with the money committees in the legislature. That’s what it’s finally all about, the money. And I don’t think that any bargaining deal that’s about the amount of money they appropriate for public education, I just don’t think that’s even constitutional. So I couldn’t figure out how to do that. I was always criticized because I didn’t include the state employees, but it wasn’t because I was trying to preclude them. I couldn’t figure how they could be involved in that sort of deal where they had to bargain with the legislature for the money, and that’s what they had been doing all the time. That bill and these other bills came in during the next session, just like I figured they would. The teachers had one, and the firemen and the policemen had one. It was my bill which was finally approved by the committee, and then passed by the senate and the legislature. People thought that I was out of my mind, a conservative authoring a piece of legislation like that. They really did. [laughter] They couldn’t believe it. And you know, it was placing the authorities in these various areas in a position where they had to bargain, and they were very unhappy about that, believe me.

*Tell me, what was in this bill?*

Well, the thing that was in the bill was basically for a mandate that the local government employers had to bargain with their employees. Before that, the school boards came to the hearings on this bill and said, “Well, you know, we got these procedures set up with the employees and we meet with them all the time.” The problem with that sort of thing was that they were at sufferance—the local employees were at sufferance to their employers where there was a school district.

*I see. They could talk to them, but they didn't have to be bargaining?*

Yes, that's right. They were just at the sufferance of the employer. And that's the thing that the employees objected to. The Local Government Employees Bargaining Act is also called the "Dodge Bill." Maybe more so now than even the school bill.

*What was the vote? Was it close?*

It wasn't real close, but it wasn't an overwhelming majority either, because there was a lot of reluctance, as you can imagine, in the legislature to get into an area like that.

*Is that still in effect today?*

Oh, you bet, and it set up all the good provisions about reviews. There was a local board that would have review procedures, and there was a provision for an appeal to the courts. It had all the good provisions in it. All of them.

The other interesting thing about the bill, which was really not essential [laughs], but it is interesting . . . . I think it was during a session in 1967, right toward the end of the session, we had a one day shutdown of the schools in the Reno area, and all of the teachers came over to hammer the legislators over the head. They didn't call it a strike, and they were only out the one day, but they shut the schools down for a day. They boiled over the legislature and they were really fired up. After we passed the bill, of course, well, then they had to set up formal bargaining procedures.

The other thing that we accomplished is . . . . We had never had a strike of public employees. That one incident in 1967 was

the closest threat, and we've never had one since, because I put a kicker on the back end of the bill that said that in a court review, the employees would be provided representation by whatever group was going to represent the majority of employees . . . the firemen, the policemen, and so on—and strikes under the common law were illegal, because common law said you couldn't strike against the king. Originally, the only authority that courts in America had was common law, which American law was based on. And in this case, I guess the courts could have hung their hats on the common law; but we wrote a provision that said, depending upon the severity of the strike and the lack of justification, a court could award up to \$50,000 a day against the striking organization, and \$5,000 a day against their officers. We've never had a strike in Nevada since 1969. [laughter]

*Well, you may have made some enemies in the party, but I bet you made hundreds and thousands of friends from the workers.*

Oh, I did. I did. Yes, I did.

*That's amazing.*

The interesting thing was that this was the first all-encompassing negotiation act in America. The first one!

*Wow!*

We never could find another one that covered everybody. I don't know whether any state has one now that covers everybody in the same piece of legislation.

*So you were a pioneer. If there is, they researched and followed yours?*



Yes. Yes.

*That's an amazing story.*

So, that has been a landmark piece of legislation.

*I see that you were a senator from 1958 to 1980. Is that the longest term that any senator served? That's a long time.*

I don't know. It's one of the longest.

*And it was always elective. They had to keep voting for you.*

Yes. Well, I stood for six elections, which would have been twenty-four years . . . four-year terms. In three of them I had contests, but in the other three, I had free rides, which spoils your [laughter]

*How do you get free rides?*

Well, nobody filed.

*Oh, I see. No one filed because they knew they couldn't win?*

Yes. So that spoils it.

*No, that's a compliment.*

When you don't have to work? [laughter]

*That's a wonderful compliment, right.*

But what happened in 1980, right after the election, I was in midterm. I was not involved in the election in November, 1980. Bob List was the governor of the state of Nevada; I was a Republican and he was a Republican.

He called me early one Saturday morning, about six-thirty, a quarter to seven, and he said, "Can you come over to the mansion this morning? I want to talk with you. I've got to leave here about ten; can you get over here before that?" It only takes about an hour to drive over there, so I guess I got over there about eight-thirty, a quarter to nine. He had a vacancy on the gaming commission. A CPA named George Schwartz from Las Vegas—a good man, a young man raising a family—had decided to resign from the commission because he wanted to be able to do accounting work and auditing work for gaming companies, and he couldn't do it while serving on the commission.

*It would be a conflict of interest.*

Yes. George resigned and left a vacancy. The commission has to split politically. There can be three from one party and two from the other. Well, it can't be all Democrats or all Republican. Anyway, this was a Republican slot that he had to fill. I went over there and we sat down in his little study at the mansion. He said, "You know, George Schwartz resigned from the commission. I got to fill that vacancy. I started out with a list of a hundred names. You know," he said, "right now, I think that the commission is a little weak." The guy that was chairman of the commission at that time was Harry Reid, who is now the senior United States Senator from Nevada. Anyway, he said, "I got down to you from a hundred names. I figured that I needed a real heavyweight to try to strengthen the commission. I think you're it."

I said, "Well, governor, I agree with you." [laughter]

*Did you complete that senate term before . . . ?*



No, I had to resign. That's the only thing that I kind of hated to do. I had made up my mind I wasn't going to run again. Nobody knew it but Betty. But, we were facing a reapportionment, and there was going to be an enormous, sparsely settled, central district here in Nevada. And at my age . . . I was sixty-five then, and I didn't have the desire to ever get involved with a lot of new counties that didn't have the same communities of interest and all that sort of thing. I knew what was going to happen on that reapportionment. I told Betty, "You know, this is the end." I also told Bob at that time. I said, "Well, Bob, you know, I'd like to serve." See, with that session . . . my last session was starting in January and this was in the latter part of November. I said, "I'd like to serve that out."

And he said, "Well, the circumstances are I got to fill the appointment now." He had to fill the appointment; he couldn't wait. So I said, "Well, let me go home and talk to Betty about it. I will be in touch with you." So, I came home, told Betty about it, and we made a decision that I'd go ahead and accept the commission appointment, which I did. Then, as I say, I had to resign from the senate.

*Now, how long would your term have lasted if you just ran the full term?*

Well, it would have lasted another two years.

*Oh, that's a long time.*

Well, see, it was a four year term. We were in the middle of the term of the election just passed, so it would have lasted another two years. I would have had twenty-five years of service instead of twenty-three.

*So then would there be an appointment for the rest of your term?*

Yes, there was an appointment.

*Apparently, if you agreed to leave the senate, that must have been a very, very important commission.*

It's the highest profile appointment that the governor of the state of Nevada makes; chairman of the gaming commission.

*Oh, and you were chairman?*

No, I was not. No, and I should have mentioned that. He said to me, "Harry Reid's term is up in April. He wants me to reappoint him, but I'm not going to do that. If you'll come on as a member, I will make you chairman in April." I don't think I would have gone on otherwise.

*OK. I can see why you agreed to that. Now, I want you to go into that Nevada gaming commission. I want you to explain, in detail, what the commission did, and a little bit about gaming and the changes while you were there.*

Well, basically the gaming commission is charged with two or three responsibilities. First, they have to determine the suitability of applicants for licenses. That's the biggest job they have. They also have to pursue violations of gaming regulations with licensees.

*Complaints come to the commission?*

Yes. Or investigations. See, they have an investigation staff of their own. And, of course, the commission has the authority,

actually, if they find that they need to do it, to just pull a license . . . to revoke a license.

*And you're an attorney.*

Yes. And there were a couple of other attorneys over my time that were on the commission and who were helping. But it has different types of responsibilities—work permits for gaming employees, an investigation division, and an auditing division. The heart of gaming is in auditing gaming companies to monitor their internal control procedures and to be sure they're complying with how to safeguard the money, from the table to the counting room and all that sort of thing. There are a lot of things involved with that. It was an interesting experience for me. It was different, but not all that foreign to me.

In April I was appointed chairman for the following year. Then there was a vacancy for a Democrat and List called me up and asked me if I could suggest some names. He wanted someone out of Washoe County, the Reno area. I got ahold of the registration list in Washoe County and went through the whole list. I had not been around the Reno area since I got out of college, but I knew a lot of people. But, there were also a lot of people I didn't know. I developed a list of four or five Democrats that I thought had the qualifications. I went over one day and gave him the list, and he said, "Do you know Skip Avansino?"

And I said, "No, I don't."

"Well," he said, "he's an attorney in Reno. He's a Democrat . . . a registered Democrat. I had him do some work developing a trust for my folks. He's a very capable guy. I've been thinking about him." He wound up appointing Skip. (Raymond was his first

name, but he was called Skip.) The day that he announced Skip's appointment, I went over there. We had a press conference.

*Had you met Skip before this?*

No I had not. Anyway, after the press conference, I took Skip over to the gaming control board offices and introduced him around. It turned out that we became very close, personal friends. He is a very capable guy, and is now president of Hilton Hotels.

*How old was he at that time?*

Oh, he was a pretty young man. He had children . . . the oldest child, when he first went on the commission, was only about ten years old. He must have been in his early forties, and highly educated. He had about three different degrees, including one from Italy in law. He was a strong man on the commission. He and I used to visit about a lot of this stuff and we got to be close, personal friends. He was great, a real nice personality, and we got along fine. I always enjoyed the personal relationship with him. He finally resigned from the commission in the middle of the term. He got to a point where . . . I don't know all the reasons, but he didn't want to continue.

*Well, if he took on hotels, that would be conflict of interest.*

Well, yes. But, this was later. I was going to mention this part. After he got off the commission, he did a little investigative work for Hilton that led to the dismissal of one of the heads of one of their hotels. Skip did the whole investigation. He said to me, "You know, I think that maybe I might have

an opportunity to get on Hilton's board. If I needed it, would you give me a letter of recommendation?"

I said, "You bet I will." So, I came back to Fallon and I drafted a letter, which I sent to him. But, in the meantime, I don't think that he had to use those. I think the Hilton was impressed with what he had done so they appointed him to the Hilton board on his own merit. And this is the whole system. The hotels and the gaming . . . the whole deal. And, at a later point in time, they made him president of the company. And so Skip had to move from Reno . . . his headquarters is at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles.

*I want the nuts and bolts of your role in the Nevada Gaming Commission, the time you spent and some of the changes while you were on the commission.*

I think we met once a month. We met sometimes in Las Vegas and sometimes in Reno. I think, as a matter of fact, we alternated pretty much. We'd have a meeting in Reno. They also had control board offices in Las Vegas. They didn't have space enough there, but they had another place where they had their hearings in Las Vegas. So we alternated. And up to that time, I don't think that people, particularly the chairman of the commission, ever even stayed in hotels where there was a gaming license. I'm not sure of that. But, they didn't have much of a relationship with the licensees. They felt, I think, they needed to stay apart.

*Yes, sure. Not to become friends.*

And, for all of the control board employees, that was an absolute rule. They couldn't stay anyplace where there was a license when they went to these meetings

or were on investigations. I took a different tack, because I felt that these people were our partners—which, in the state of Nevada, they are, because of the revenue aspects that the state enjoys from licensees. So, one of the first things I did was to set up . . . . One month that we had the meeting down there, the Wednesday before the meeting, which was on Thursday, I made appointments with the eight top casino executives in Las Vegas. They came to the control board offices. They accommodated me, and I spent about an hour with each one of them.

*Where was your office?*

It was in the control board offices in Las Vegas. The Gaming Control Board is a two-tiered system. The first level of approval is the control board which investigates applicants and people that are already licensed. The final level of approval is the Nevada Gaming Commission, which I chaired.

*Is this office in a separate building or . . . ?*

No, their quarters were in rented space in Las Vegas and Reno. We don't have a separate office. They had one attorney on the staff that was designated to represent the commission at each commission meeting.

*But what was your mailing address if people had to send you complaints?*

Well, they would go to the central office in Carson City.

*Oh, in Carson City. And then would they direct the communications to you?*

Well, no. What happened on these deals is that we would get summaries. For example,

I was involved in the Sinatra licensing soon after I got on the board, and it was an enormous investigation. That has to be paid for by the licensee. And that was conducted in eight separate counties where he had performed, and all over the United States. It took about eighteen or twenty months to complete the investigation. Then we would get this investigative report, and it would go into all kinds of things about the person and his background.

*Were they looking to see if there was anything illegal?*

Yes. Or whether he was unsuitable by virtue of his associations with questionable people.

*Or if they've had any . . . I'm not talking about Sinatra, but if someone has had a prison record or . . . ?*

Well, anything that might affect their integrity or their financial status. That's one of the big ones, their financial ability. And the control board would ask a lot of questions and develop a record during its hearings. They'd get the transcript out right away, by the end of the week. Their meetings were on Thursday and usually, I'd have a . . .

*They'd meet every week?*

No. Once a month. And I'd usually have a messenger out of Carson City, for example, hand deliver the transcripts to me by Saturday or Sunday following the Thursday meetings. We would know everything that was going to be on the agenda. Then we had the opportunity to spend a few days looking those deals over, including the record of their interrogation, and then we'd have that

background when we went into our meeting the following Thursday.

*Now, did you make the final decisions based on the materials they gave you?*

Yes.

*I see. Did you, in any way, have to direct anything that you wanted as part of the investigation?*

No.

*They do that?*

Yes.

OK.

They did it. That was their responsibility.

*OK. So your responsibility was when it came to you . . .*

It was the final judgement.

*The final judgement. Did you ever have to meet the people, go to the gaming place, or do anything besides sit in a meeting?*

No. No. Just on the record.

*On the record . . . and mainly it was the people.*

Yes, that's right; particularly for licensing, it was the suitability of the person.

*So now, besides the licensing, what were some of the other . . . ?*

Well, as I told you, we had violation hearings, where we pulled licenses and fined people.

*So when you had hearings, people would have to come?*

Oh, yes. They were full-blown hearings. Yes. And these were all public meetings when the gaming control board met. That's a public meeting. Look, the way this thing happened is the investigations were confidential, but the public part of it was in their questioning and answers to develop a record, don't you see?

OK. OK.

But they never revealed their own sources. Now, there's one difference—when Atlantic City licensed gaming, they would show that background report to the to the applicant, which I think is absolutely wrong. That was crazy. One of the things you're trying to find out about is the guy's integrity. So what we would do is, we would ask him a lot of questions to see if we could trip him up on something that he didn't know was in the record.

*I see. Now, did you as chair run those hearings?*

Oh, yes. You bet.

*So there was a definite advantage to being an attorney. You would have to be an attorney to do that.*

Well, not necessarily, but usually you had to be an attorney.

*Now, back to when you got together these eight leaders of some of the big casinos. They came to that office, did you say?*

Yes. They did. Over to the control board offices in Las Vegas, and I had nice visits with them. I always stayed at a hotel, one of the licensee's . . .

*And you paid for it?*

The other thing is that I personally called on whoever was the top management in the company while I was there just to pay my respects. And so, I still think it's correct . . . I don't know what they do now.

*Yes. As long as you're paying for your room and your . . .*

Oh, yes. Sure.

Then as I say, I took the position that they were our partners. You know, we were interested in what they were doing and in their successes.

*Were there many hearings? Was there much corruption during that period?*

Yes, there was some. And of course, normally those things were properly developed in these investigative reports. And we were very leery of people that had any associations with unsuitables. Very leery regardless of what they might say. I remember guys that even withdrew their applications before we took action, where we were going to deny their applications. It was a pretty good process and it still is. Fortunately, there has never been any question about the integrity of gaming commissions in Nevada. You know, there's never been any scandal, which I think is a great testimony to the selection of the people that they put on that commission.

*They can't be bribed or . . . ?*

Yes. Right. And the kind of interesting sequel to that is that one of the guys I visited with that day was Bill Bennett from Circus Circus. I remember the conversation with



him like it was yesterday. There was a change of administration and a Democrat was elected and he appointed his own Democratic chairman of the commission. He was a good man, but this was the highest profile appointment in Nevada. So anyway, Bennett called me in 1989 and he said . . . this is kind of interesting, this conversation. He said, "We got an opening for an outside director in the company. I wondered whether you would consider it."

And I said, "Well, I appreciate your calling me. You know, I was asked to be a director of Del Webb." (Webb was in the gaming business in Nevada at that time. You know, the big real estate developers?) And I said, "I didn't want to go on that board for two reasons. One, I thought they were losers in the gaming business in Nevada, which they were. They didn't know how to operate the gaming end. But the other one is that I do not believe in the revolving door theory, which is that the regulator joins the group that he has been regulating" I said I didn't believe in that, and he said, "Well, there's no door in 1989." [laughter] Anyway, I finally told him that I would enjoy doing it. Primarily the reason I've enjoyed it is it's kept me active.

*Are you still on that?*

I'm still on it. He finally said to me, "Well, I appreciate it. You know, I wanted someone with an impeccable reputation," he said to me.

*Well, he got it. I have a lot of questions about that because I spend time in Reno a lot and I do a lot of research there. I also did some business in Las Vegas very recently, and I am just amazed and in awe of that Circus Circus enterprise.*

Yes.

*Aren't they the largest companies, creating the most places of any . . .*

Yes, they have. Right now their stock is down. All gaming stocks are kind of taking a beating because of so much competition in the country. So I don't know what's going to happen to Circus or some of these other companies in the future against the competition.

*Let's move back to some of your public service again, before we go deeper into the Circus Circus enterprises. What were some of your other major public service activities?*

Well, the only other one that I think about is in the session of 1985. Sue Wagner, who is now lieutenant governor of Nevada, started in the assembly and then she was in the senate. I always liked her very much. She authored a piece of legislation . . . we'd had some ethics legislation in the past, but this was a new piece of legislation setting up a Nevada commission on ethics. And it had some dedicated slots. One was for an ex-county commissioner. Another one was for an ex-city councilman. Another one was for an ex-legislator. They're called dedicated slots. So she called me one day after the session was over, and she wanted to be sure that she got a good commission put together to start this process. She asked me if I'd take that slot as an ex-legislator. I agreed to do that, and I was appointed as the first chairman of the Nevada Ethics Commission. This was happening in Nevada, just as it was all over the country.

*Anything specific?*

No. No. It was just a general idea about honesty and government, and ethics and government. And it's getting to be a stronger



issue all the time in this country. But anyway, because of my high regard for her and how important I knew it was, I told her I would take that appointment for a four year term. We issued opinions to people at all levels of government including legislators about ethical questions. We would have hearings with them which would be public, to a point, and their own deliberations about what they wanted to report were confidential. I then completed that term from 1985 to 1989 and helped her select a successor—an ex-legislator, Spike Wilson, in Reno. He's an ex-senator and he's well-regarded. He's still the chairman of the commission at this point in time.

*How often did you meet, where did you meet, what were some of the issues that were discussed, or new rules made during that period? I need more specificity.*

Well, we didn't have any regular scheduled meetings. We responded to requests for opinions.

*I see.*

And when we'd receive a request, we had a deputy attorney general who was our legal advisor. And we had an office in the secretary of state's office. We also had a secretary who was secretary of the commission, so all communications went there.

*You had to go to Carson City?*

Well, no—communications went there.

*I see.*

Now, we scheduled hearings depending on who was requesting. We had several hearings in Las Vegas on matters that had

to do with people in Las Vegas . . . public employees or . . .

*Without giving names, can you give some of the issues?*

Well, we had several legislative requests, you know, where there were conflicts of interest in their legislative activities against something they were doing in the interim. And in most of those cases, we upheld the legislature on the theory that Nevada's a part-time legislature and they're entitled to make a living doing whatever else they're doing.

*Because they don't get paid much?*

No. And it's not a full-time thing. And so they're entitled like everybody else to make a living. And as long as it was the type of an activity . . . if they were handling it properly, doing it properly, that did not raise ethical questions. But they wanted clearances. A lot of the early opinions we had were people that wanted clearances.

*To have it on the record.*

To have it on the record.

*Did they ever abstain from voting if they felt they might have a conflict of interest?*

Well, you mean in the legislature?

Yes.

Yes. Oh, yes. A lot of people would abstain for personal reasons and there's also some legislative provisions about that sort of thing which guided them, too, as far as their legislative activities. They're getting a lot more of these now than when I was on there.

I had a neighbor over here that was on this commission for a while, and then the last I knew, they had a backlog of about twenty or so of these requests. And a lot of them were pretty serious things to be analyzed. One of the first requests which we considered was a member of the legislature who was selling lots, and a newspaper article indicated that he was using his position in the legislature to generate sales. Barbara Bennett, former mayor of Reno, one of the original commission members, simply misconstrued at the outset of what this man was doing. The rest of us knew what the correct interpretation was. These two activities were tracking in parallel routes. We discussed this, and it took us a while to get her straightened around on what the record really was, don't you see? But normally, once we all agreed on the factual situation, we didn't have too much problem about what decision we arrived at. And, of course, we were basically without too much precedent, so we were kind of plowing new ground, you know, on some of these things. During my time we didn't have all that many, as I say, and the commission has taken on a lot more importance since 1989. Now, it's a much bigger thing. That's about all I'd comment on that. She [Sue Wagner] appreciated the fact that I served, and I helped her in locating somebody else that was good . . . an ex-senator.

*Did you leave on your own because you didn't want to serve anymore?*

No, I didn't want to serve anymore. Originally, I didn't have that much enthusiasm about it, but I was doing it for her.

*To help her get it started. Do you want to put on record any other of your public service positions?*

No, I think that's mainly it.

*Then let's move on to more of your recognitions, and we'll get later to the rest of the Circus Circus director.*

Yes.

*But what other recognitions can you tell us about and put on record?*

Well, I always thought probably the most important one that I ever . . . well, the second most important one was this honorary doctor of laws degree that I received from my own university. See, I graduated from the University of Nevada in 1936, and then went down to Stanford to law school. In 1981 they [the University of Nevada, Reno] conferred upon me an honorary doctor of law degree at the university. The reason for that, in my opinion, goes back to the local school support tax, because there was revenue to help public education—it freed up more money out of the state general fund to go to the university system. They always recognized that and appreciated it. I remember Joe Crowley, who's president of the university, you know . . . I visited about this sort of thing, and he really appreciated what happened on that piece of legislation and its possible effects on the university's future.

*I'm sure they respected you, though, for all of your years in the senate and all of your other contributions.*

And of course it was my own university. Don Reynolds was given an honorary degree in journalism at the same time. He was not a native Nevadan or anything like that, but he had the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, which is an excellent paper. And he had done a lot

for the university and particularly the school of journalism, so they gave him an honorary doctor degree in journalism.

*Well describe the ceremony.*

Well, first of all, we were in robes. [laughter] It was a nice day. It was an outdoor graduation and there were statements made in his case and my case about our backgrounds and the reason for the recognition and the conferring of the honorary degrees.

*It must have been a big crowd. Did you celebrate after? Did you have a celebration?*

Well, no, not particularly.

*No, it was just another event during the commencement exercises in May of that year. [laughter]*

*But I mean after you got that, most students go celebrate. Did you go celebrate with your family and friends?*

Well, some of the students might. [laughter] I'm a little too old for that kind of celebration. Later on, I got this honorary associate degree from the Western Nevada Community College. I helped create the community college system.

*Oh, you didn't tell us about that.*

Well, it was during Paul Laxalt's time, and Paul was running for governor and he was down in Pioche, Nevada, about two weeks before the election. He was running against Grant Sawyer, who was seeking a third term as governor. No governor has ever been elected to a third term, for one reason or another, in Nevada. So Paul, in Pioche, Nevada, talked

about creating a community college system. I read it the next day in the paper and I said, "This guy is going out of his mind." All I could see was dollar signs [laughter] about the cost to the community college system.

*So you had to worry about getting money for the schools?*

Yes. So, anyway, he was elected. He appointed a committee to investigate an embryo community college deal that had been set up with local funds in Elko. And they had raised 100,000 bucks or so up there, and they started a little community college. So, we went up there. We had this committee, some legislators and educators, and we went up there and spent a couple of days in Elko. They had a pretty good program. They had people out of Oregon and Idaho who were familiar with community colleges. The more I personally became acquainted with it, I realized that although the whole committee had previously thought we had been doing a pretty good job for higher education on behalf of the sons and daughters of Nevada citizens, the fact was that we were offering nothing to about half the high school graduates, because they were not going on to college, or else they were failing in college.

*Yes, or they lived so far away they . . .*

Well, that was one thing, and then a lot of them got washed out of college in their first years and that sort of thing. So we came to the recognition that we ought to be doing something for students who, for one reason or another . . . either because they couldn't afford it or because they didn't have the intellectual attainment, at that point in time, to go on to the senior universities. And so we wound up creating the community college system.

*What year was it created?*

I'd have to go back in the statutes to find out. [1969] But, anyway, we created the system.

One of the decisions we made concerned Elko community college wanting a separate board of regents. They wanted to be called Nevada Community College. We didn't go for that, because if we were going to set up one, we knew that we had to accommodate the Las Vegas area (Clark County) and the Reno area and other areas in Nevada. We called them the Northern Nevada Community College, and then we created at the same time the Western Nevada Community College, which is headquartered in Carson City. And then later there was one created in Reno called the Northern Nevada Community College. I don't think that was at the outset, but originally there was Elko, Western Nevada and Clark County.

*Where did the money come from?*

Well . . . that was one of the problems. It had to come out of the university budget, and of course it substantially increased the cost of the total university system. Although community colleges are a lot more self-supporting, moneywise through whatever they charge . . .

*The tuition.*

Yes, the tuition.

*But how did they build the buildings? Isn't that the biggest expense?*

Yes. The legislature began to appropriate money for construction. Now, that leads me to what happened here in Fallon, which was a major effort. At a later point in time, this was

after I was out of the legislature, the Nevada Community College was headquartered in Carson City. They had a branch here that was operating out of the local schools.

*They would meet in the schools at night?*

Yes, in their classrooms at night.

*That's a good idea.*

Yes. And so that's how it started here in Fallon. So, we wanted to try to create a separate college campus here. I had a lot of good friends who were on the finance committee in the senate, and I was trying to get the funds approved, as a capital improvement under the capital improvement program. I failed in that session to get the job done. Some of my friends on the finance committee came to me and apologized. They said they simply didn't have the money to start a separate campus here. They were a little gun-shy of that. We decided in the interim that we had not been well enough prepared going into that session. What we did, we had developed a very good plan, whereby, through a local committee, we developed the statistical information on the participation in the local community college the way it was just meeting at night in school buildings and one thing and another. They've always had an enormous appetite here for that sort of thing.

*That's wonderful.*

And better than almost any community in Nevada. So anyway, we made presentations. We started at the university level with the board of regents, made a presentation to them because, see, they had developed their own priorities for a capital improvement program to present to the legislature.

*Did the university resent the start of community colleges because it took money from them?*

Well, in a way; but on the other hand, it substantially expanded their educational influence in Nevada because it was part of the university system, and it's probably the largest part now. Thousands of kids in these community colleges today . . .

*There are a lot from community college going to the university after two years.*

Yes, but it created a better stature for them in the long run. So anyway, we started with the university. We went to the agency that handles the capital improvements program for the state of Nevada. We went to them, made a presentation. We made a presentation to the governor who has to decide what he's going to recommend on these budgets, ultimately. And then finally we made a presentation to the next session of the legislature about starting a campus here, and that's when we got it on. And if we hadn't of done it in that session we'd never have been able to get it, because the money got tight and there were too many other demands.

*Tremendous contribution.*

Well, we got it started. I don't know whether you have been over there recently and seen the campus or not.

*No. I have to go over there.*

It's a nice little campus. I'll take you over if you . . .

*Good, good.*

But anyway, now it's developed into three buildings, nice little campus. Got about 1,100 students—not full-time, but individuals taking courses—and the whole system has gotten enormous recognition in Nevada.

*Wonderful contribution too. I think that is a major contribution to this state.*

Yes it is, yes it is.

*Because traveling up in that northern part, which is very far, it's hard for a lot of them to come down.*

Well, they're now trying to get one established in Winnemucca. They've been trying that for years. They haven't got that done yet. Maybe they will. But here in this area, for example, they serve Lovelock, Hawthorne, Yerington, and Fernley. It's a good system.

*Do they also have, as most community colleges do, some practical vocational courses? Do they have agricultural courses?*

Oh yes, oh yes. A lot of those, yes.

*Isn't that wonderful?*

Yes, they got a full offering really. Amazing. And they've got a good dean here and some good instructors. See, they have some full-time instructors and then they have a lot of people who just teach courses on contract for X number of dollars. That's how, because of my original participation, I happened to get this honorary associate degree.

*Was that also at a ceremony?*

Yes. In Carson City during a community college graduation.

*I can see you're very interested in education.*

Yes I am. I am.

*And I think that is so important. Let me get back now to your role as an outside director in the Circus Circus Enterprises. I wonder if you would tell us something about the enterprises and what you're learning and what you're doing as a director.*

Well, you know I never thought I would ever wind up in a position like this. It just never entered my mind. But, as I told you, I accepted it finally because it was something that kept me occupied, and it was a new challenge and a new experience, and it has been a nice experience. And I want to tell you a little about Bill Bennett. He and his partner Bill Pennington bought the Circus Circus originally from Jay Sarno. But, they were not the builders of it. They were attracted by this concept of a family entertainment deal for the kids, and that's why the circus deal . . . . Bill Bennett was originally in the furniture business and the restaurant business in Phoenix. He went bankrupt one time, and I can't tell you which business it was, but anyway, he told me that he had, at one time, owned a restaurant down there that made more money than any restaurant in America. So, he was a food man. He's always been a food man. He understands menus, and a lot of things about the food business that most people in gaming never knew. I think that's a lot of why you were, maybe, impressed by the way the food operations were run. And he had been in the gaming business in

Nevada. He came from Phoenix and started at Lake Tahoe working for Del Webb. That's how he started in the gaming business. And he was in Las Vegas managing a casino when this opportunity came up to acquire Circus Circus.

*Did it first start in Las Vegas before Reno?*

Yes, the first Circus Circus was in Las Vegas, and then later the one was built up here. But anyway, so that's a little about his own background, and he told me that Jay Sarno had some real problems as far as connection with unsuitable people. And he was not doing any good with Circus Circus, so they bought it, I think, on a shoestring deal. And he told me that . . .

*They, is that Bennett?*

Bennett and Pennington. Pennington found the deal and came to Bennett, and so the two of them bought it.

*And this is the one in Las Vegas?*

Yes, the old Circus Circus. They saw the value of the way that thing was being operated. And so Bennett said that the only time they were in the red, after they bought it, was the first month. And I said, "Well how did you do that?"

And he said, "Well, I cut the cost and increased the revenues." [laughter]

*He's still there running it?*

Oh yes, yes. He's sixty-eight or whatever. And he lives that business everyday. And he's a hands-on manager. Right now the stock is



not all that great, but it is a good company. The most interesting thing about what happens to them is they got a free cash flow—that's after all bills are paid—of about 160 or 170 million dollars a year. And they recently got a line of credit from a consortium of banks headed by Bank of America for 750 million dollars, which is the largest commitment that banks have ever made to a gaming operation in the country.

*Didn't they just recently, the last couple of years, open several other big hotels?*

Well, they built the Excalibur and then they built the Luxor, which have both been built in very recent years and which are excellent hotels and enjoy good returns.

But anyway, it's a well-run company; and as I say, the stock has been down recently. It doesn't pay any dividends. It just depends on its growth factor to increase the value of the stock, and over the years it's been very good to investors.

But in any event, to get back to my own personal experience in the company, people have asked me if I was intimidated about being a director and I said, "No, I'm not intimidated, but I'm not used to the large figures." [laughter] And so I'm on the company's audit committee, which is a three-man committee. I'm not the chairman. The chairman is a past president of the First Interstate Bank and has been a director of Circus since it went public. It's been about eleven or twelve years ago now. He's the chairman and I'm on the committee. The audit committee is the most important committee in a publicly traded corporation.

*Now a lot of questions: how often do you meet? Do you get to go to the hotel?*

Well we meet four times a year for regular meetings and then we have special meetings, either to get together or else we have quite a few during the year, some telephonic board meetings where we can take minor actions.

*Do you help with any of the decisions? Do you vote on any decisions? What is an outside director?*

Well not as far as the day-to-day management of the company.

*When they were going to build a new hotel?*

Well, we do. You bet. Yes, those are major financial commitments, sure.

*Were you involved in either of these two that you just mentioned?*

Well, only in the decisions to go ahead and build them.

*In the decision, OK. That's a major decision.*

They are major decisions, and they need to be approved by a board.

*So in order to approve it you've got to know what their finances are?*

Oh well, you got to know the whole story. Directors have a potential liability if they don't perform properly. And I've looked into that and I think the important part of a director's action . . . . Take an outside director: an outside director is a guy who represents the shareholders. The inside directors are management people. There's a chief executive officer and there's a chief financial officer and

so on . . . the chief operating officer. They're inside directors. The outside directors are there to protect the stockholders, and that is an enormous responsibility, really.

*How many stockholders do they have?*

Oh, I don't know. They have thousands.

*And you send reports to the stockholders?*

Well, the report to the stockholders comes out annually, but I'm saying that the determinative actions that are taken by . . . and the votes that outside directors make are, presumably, taken in the interest of stockholders, not the management.

*That's a good description of that.*

And the important thing, as far as the legal potential liability is that an outside director has a responsibility to be fully informed, absolutely fully informed, before he makes a decision. Now, that doesn't mean to say that if a decision is wrong that he's vulnerable, particularly if it's a fully informed judgement at the time. That's the important thing. And so we are, and I personally try to be, completely informed, and so does everybody else, on the actions that are taken.

*How many outside directors are there?*

At the present time there are five, and three inside directors . . . and there will be a fourth inside director. We just appointed a new chief financial officer who will be appointed to the board at the time of our annual meeting, which is later this month in Las Vegas.

*So that's not too many. I mean, you have a big responsibility . . .*

Well it's a nine person board. But a majority now of five . . . originally Circus was criticized about that, because they originally only had a couple of outside directors, but they kept adding outside directors, and they now have five outside directors.

*Do you get to get acquainted with their hotels?*

Well, not significantly. Like in Las Vegas we always stay there.

*And see how it's run?*

Yes. And, but that isn't an essential ingredient of a director's job, necessarily.

*Is this an open ended appointment?*

No. It's by terms.

*And how long is that?*

They are three-year terms.

*So, this year is your second term?*

Yes, I'm in my second term now, yes, right.

*Are you going to stay on again next term?*

I don't know. I've been thinking about that and I'm not sure that I will. I've got to check it out. I think I've got two more years to serve, after this annual meeting in June. But, I'll be eighty-one then, and I'm not sure that I think that people that reach that age should continue on as . . .

*I don't think age matters [laughter], if your mind is good.*

Well, I understand that, and to an extent that's true, but I'm a little sensitive about [my age] . . . and I've been on a committee that's some of these new directors. And I've had two things that I've tried to emphasize. One we haven't been able to accomplish yet, but we will somewhere along the line. But, the other thing that I felt we ought to have a high priority on is getting some younger directors on that board that can be there for a number of years.

*Be there, continuity.*

Now the other thing that we do not have is a woman or a minority person on the board.

*Oh, OK. Those are good ideas.*

And so, ideally, the next appointment that we would make on that board would be a Hispanic woman.

*I was just going to say [laughter] that will be something there.*

You know, ideally. If you can find her. Bennett, I talked to him about it when we had a meeting about who we wanted to try to pick. He knows one that I don't know there in Las Vegas, but she's involved in some other things, so he didn't seem to think she would be available. But he did know a Hispanic woman. All of those things need to be considered when you select a director. And I'm on that committee, that recruitment committee. But anyway, I haven't made a decision yet, but I'm inclined to tender a resignation at least. You know, if they want me to stay on, I guess I'll

do that, but I'm a little sensitive about the age deal. I think that some younger people ought to be on there.

*Some younger, but they always need someone a little older and wiser.*

Well look, the people that they've got on there, even at some younger ages, have had a lot of experience. One of the guys we recently put on was the guy that handled Donrey Enterprises. His name is Fred Smith, and this guy had been a terrific executive. And he sits on a couple of the corporate boards. Art Smith, who is on the Circus board, is also a Director of John Deere and Nevada Power Company. He is also a trustee of the Howard Keck Foundation, a large charitable foundation. It's an enormous foundation that is headquartered in Southern California. Enormous wealth in that foundation. So, he's had a lot of experience on big boards. So, we got guys that are, you know, really experienced at that sort of thing.

*Can you tell us—because I know just from my observation that it is such a big employment corporation—a little bit about the number of employees, how it helps the economy, some of those contributions, because I think they're such a large corporation.*

Well, I don't know what the number is now—something over twenty-thousand since they opened the Luxor. That's more employees than the state of Nevada has. And as companies go, I think they are very good to their employees. They never seem to have any problems with negotiations when they sit down with employees.

*Are they unionized?*

They are unionized. They are the only unionized company in Northern Nevada, in the Reno area. But Bennett's got an interesting theory about that. He feels that he wants everybody to be unionized so that everybody's got a level playing field. And he objects to—there's one company down there now, the Frontier Hotel, that's had strikes . . .

*Yes, I observed that.*

And now MGM, they've got a big suit going now. See, they would not recognize the culinary union, which is the largest union. That's all the cooks and waiters and bartenders, and it's large, a very large union. MGM wouldn't sign a contract with them; now they've been picketing the MGM, and blocking the sidewalks. They claim that the sidewalk is public property. MGM claims that it's theirs. And now MGM is going to file a suit to enjoin the picketing on the sidewalk.

Well, Bennett always thought that the Frontier should be unionized like the rest of them and I suppose that he feels that same way about MGM. So, it's a level playing field. And he has had no problems with employees; none. They like him very much. They know that he tries to treat them fairly.

*I'm sure they would stay longer so you wouldn't have to keep retraining.*

You know, they have an excellent relationship with their employees.

*Where does he recruit all of these people?*

Well, I don't know. What he does, when he builds a new hotel is to take certain key people out of existing operations to put into the new hotel to train a lot of other people. It's

a kind of ongoing process of expansion, and I don't know all the intricacies. During the initial stage a lot of things go on and you're not completely organized, you know, but they've gotten along pretty well. So far, they've been able to man their top management positions from inside the organization, moving people up. And among the lower echelon, word gets out and brings them in.

*Well, I'm impressed by it. Have there been, at no fault of the management, but have there been other forces coming in that have created any problems as far as the gambling is concerned?*

No, other than the competition, the national competition in all gaming. We haven't expanded to the extent that a lot of companies have into other areas. We did lose an important one that we thought that we were going to get down in Auckland, New Zealand recently. Got down to two companies and the other company simply offered so much more money to buy the single location down there that we just got blown out of the water.

*You mean you wanted to open something in Auckland? Open a gambling casino? I'm confused.*

Yes. It's the only state in Australia that doesn't have a single casino. And there was an enormous potential down there. It's about five million people and the Olympics are going to be down there in the next few years. It's a gorgeous site on the harbor there, and we were really hoping we could land that one. But anyway, we lost that one.

*Who got it?*

Showboat, along with a partner in a construction company in Auckland. We have partners in Auckland too, but anyway, those things come and go.

*Now does Circus Circus enterprises have places outside of Nevada?*

Yes, they were just recently involved with Caesar's and Hilton in a casino that has just opened in Windsor, Canada, thirty miles north of Detroit.

*Do they have anything in Atlantic City?*

No, they don't. They never elected to go there. And they never elected to go down into—considering the circumstances—into New Orleans. They didn't compete on that one.

*What do you mean, "the circumstances?"*

Well they didn't like the whole deal; the cost of it, the tax that was going to be imposed, some other factors, but they've got an interesting one just twenty miles north of New Orleans on the Mississippi called Chalmette. And that looks like it might be a real good location. The one in New Orleans is supposed to be built down in the French Quarter, and from what we understand, that's a bad area. There's a lot of crime down there, a lot of deaths and . . . . The Chalmette is an area that is eighty percent white, and, environmentally, it's a much nicer area than the French Quarter. And we think that a lot of that business that everybody was so hot on in New Orleans is going to come up to Chalmette rather than to go down to the French Quarter in New Orleans. And we just got the license finally approved on that.

*Knowing that prostitution is legal in Nevada, I wonder if you can tell us, first of all, about the law.*

Well . . . let me say this, there's always been prostitution in Nevada, since the mining days, just like it was with gaming. We'd have times of legal gaming and illegal gaming over the years, but there's always been gaming in Nevada. There was when I was a kid in this community in Reno. It's always been here, either legally or illegally. And that's the case with prostitution. If it's properly supervised and run correctly, it isn't all that evil a thing. Prostitution is legal here in this county, and most of the brothels are out . . . you pass them going out of the valley on the way to Austin. And I think a lot of the location had to do with the Navy installation out there.

*Was it there before the Navy came?*

No. Now, years ago . . . . I want to tell you a funny story about that. There was one over here on North Taylor Street when I was a kid. Never, never had any problem with it. There was a woman that ran it.

*Was it a house?*

Yes. It was a house. And it had a big board fence around it, so it was sealed off. And this is a humorous story. My sister, who was a very virtuous person, was collecting money during the war for . . . I don't know, some war deal activity. So she went up there. [laughter]

*Oh, she didn't know?*

Well, I don't know. I think she did. But anyway, she went up there and she rapped on the door, and this madam came to the

door, and she was soliciting funds. And she said, "Well, I'll give you a little money, but I can't give you too much because you know in my business all the boys are away, and my business is pretty slow." My sister always laughed at that.

*That's right, during the war.*

Well, as I mentioned, prostitution in Nevada is a local option thing within counties, and interestingly enough, one of the counties that never legalized prostitution was Clark County.

*Is that right?*

And I don't know what the current situation is in the hotels, but they used to be filled with prostitutes.

*The hotels. In other words, they would use rooms.*

Well yes, and they would be around the bars. And you could always tell normally. They would be sitting around waiting for somebody to pick them up. But in any event, and I don't know what the current situation is, I can't tell you, but as far as I know, street prostitution is rampant in Las Vegas, rampant.

*Oh, it is?*

Street prostitution.

*Is that legal?*

No, it's not legal. I don't know whether they really have much enforcement on it or not. But, you know, the whole question about that is people think it has evil connotations,

which in a sense it does, but it has been my observation that if you don't have legalized, regulated prostitution, all you do is have street prostitutes.

*Right. Now what is the law?*

Well, as I told you it's local option about legalizing brothels. In legalized brothels, one of the positive things is a requirement for regular medical examinations.

*Do they need to get a license for a brothel?*

The brothel needs to be licensed locally, yes. That's correct.

*And are they taxed? Do they pay taxes on property or . . .*

Well, they do on the property. I don't think they do on earnings or income . . .

*Are there rules about the prostitute staying within the brothel and not going to bars? Is it more detailed?*

I couldn't answer that, I mean, it's a regulated thing. For example, around here it's no big deal. In a deal like that it's not before the public eye.

*No, as an outsider I would never observe it if the place wasn't pointed out.*

And you never hear anything about it unless you got some kind . . . Well, this Joe Conforte had this one up out of Sparks, you know. He was very notorious; he had the Mustang Ranch.

*Oh yes. Isn't it still there?*



Yes, it's still there. But he had it. That was legalized in Storey County—Virginia City is the county seat. And he got a lot of publicity, which he sought. And so that was a kind of notorious type deal because of the publicity that it developed. I don't know how many counties in Nevada have legalized prostitution, but a lot of them do, up along Interstate 80, like in Elko and so on. I think in Winnemucca and Battle Mountain. But in any event, as far as the people around these deals and have been around them for years, you know, it's no big deal to them.

*Right, right.*

And they don't view it in the context that it's necessarily an evil activity, you know.

*And there's never trouble at those places?*

No, no. They're regulated and they don't have problems with them. And, as I say, the girls have to have medical examinations and that sort of thing.

*Is there a person like an inspector to make sure that is done?*

No. And it's probably depending on the county.

*Probably in the health department.*

Well, yes. And the county, whatever regulations they have for it, and I don't know. But, as I say, if you look around America where they don't have legalized prostitution, they have worlds and worlds of street prostitutes everywhere.

*I know that you were involved with the Valley Plaza Shopping Center. Can you give us details*

*about how that was started and tell us about that?*

The property out there along where the shopping center was built was owned by a man who had a livestock auction here. And he bought that property, and that was agricultural property. It was in alfalfa fields, and I think he eventually had in mind to try to develop it out along the highway itself.

*Give us the location.*

Well, it's on Williams Avenue which blends into the Reno highway going west. And at the time, as I say, it was all fields. It was undeveloped. There was no water, sewer, or electricity on the property. Now, he went bankrupt, and his property came up for sale, and they parceled it into one-acre parcels along the highway there. By the time of the second sale, we had liquidated the construction company, which I think I indicated was liquidated in 1965. But in any event, I was a stockholder through my mother and deceased father, along with my sister, in the construction company.

So, when the company was liquidated, I received eighty thousand dollars out of that liquidation. I took forty thousand of it and bought some property next to where my mother lived on Williams Avenue over here, where American Savings and Loan is now. She had a bedroom on the ground floor that faced us. This acreage was over to the east of her, and I wanted to protect her. I didn't want to have any kind of a disturbance, particularly at night, where she slept on that lower floor. I was afraid. At that time I could see commercial development coming along that street, so I spent forty thousand of that money to buy this property to protect her. And I had the other forty thousand. I had the Island Ranch at that

time, but I never drew anything out of that property other than what I had to live on. And I really didn't have any cash to put into anything, so I decided that I'd try to buy some of those lots from a trustee in bankruptcy. The corner lot, where First Interstate's Branch is now, had been sold. But there were eight lots, one-acre parcels, from there going east.

*Those were empty lots?*

Yes. Just fields . . . fields. I had no idea about when am I ever to get any development going on it, because there was nothing out there. There were no utilities or anything. I figured it would be at least ten years. So, I bid these eight lots.

*Now what year were you doing this?*

Oh, I don't know. Let's see, when did I build the shopping center?

1978.

All right. Well this was probably around the early seventies. So, I bid the eight lots, all or nothing. All or nothing for the forty thousand. So when they opened the bids, the trustee in bankruptcy figured that was too cheap and he recommended to the court that it turn down the bid. So he came back to me—he was a local guy who was a trustee; I knew him well. He was a real estate man. He said, "That's too cheap."

I said, "Well, Al, it's all the money I've got." So I said, "Sell it to somebody else."

Then he came to me and he had three other isolated lots—they were not contiguous—that had not sold. He said, "Well, I'll sell you those lots if you take these other three lots for five-thousand each." See, that was forty thousand for eight lots. Five thousand a lot.

I said, "Al, I've still only got the forty thousand. [laughter] I don't have it."

So what he did, he wound up finally selling the other three lots to three different buyers, and he recommended that the court accept this forty thousand dollar bid I had made on these eight lots. What happened first, I sold three of the lots for the forty thousand that I had invested in eight lots for a service station that is over there now, the Chevron station. So I took that forty thousand and bought out a couple of Armenian brothers who owned the corner lot over there on Allen Road where the First National Branch Bank is in order to block the ground out to the highway. So, then the predecessors of Raley's came along and they wanted to buy three lots next to the service station.

*Now who was that?*

The predecessor to Raley's was Eagle Thrifty. It was a local chain. I sold them those three lots for \$180,000.

*What year was that?*

Oh . . . I think that was in the middle . . . . Oh, I know what happened, though. First of all, what we did, what we had to do out there before any of this developed, we formed an assessment district out there. The people that owned in there realized that in order to develop it commercially, you have to put the utilities in. So we formed an assessment district.

*You formed it?*

No, we. I said we as a group formed it.

*Yes, but who was the leader to get them together.*

Well, we had an attorney who did the work for us. And so we formed the assessment district and put an assessment on ourselves to be paid off over a period of years for the utilities. So we got water and sewer and . . .

*It was in the mid-1970s, early to mid?*

Yes, yes. So once we put the assessment district in, then these other things became feasible. And that's when I first sold the property for the service station, and then I bought the corner lot. Then Eagle Thrifty came along and I sold that property, as I say, three acres for \$180,000. And that left me three acres on a . . . because I had bought the one acre over on the corner. I bought the acre on the corner under that bankruptcy, which was down on a corner of the highway and Allen Road, where First Interstate's Branch is. So, then I figured that if the supermarket went in there, that I would build out the balance of the property. They wound up selling their property to Raley's. Then when Raley's came in, the developer that had the contract was going to build a building and long-term lease it to Raley's, which is the way they operated. Their original plan was that part of the shopping center that sits there now. And so they were going to put their store out in the middle of their property.

*Where the parking lot is now?*

Yes, right. And so I said, "Well look, why don't you put it over against the property line and I'll build the rest of it out." And they said, "OK." So, they went over to the property line, and then the first building that we built was there where Sprouse-Reitz was located. They went bankrupt, and that's why it happens to be vacant now. But I originally got a long-term lease from Sprouse-Reitz. And they

started their construction, and then I started to design the rest of them. And then I was in the legislative session and I got an architect in Carson that had built a store down in Hawthorne for Sprouse-Reitz that was the size that we were going to use. We used the same 15,000 square feet plan, so we didn't have to do that part of the design.

*I see. Had you already gotten word from Sprouse-Reitz that they wanted to come into your building.*

Yes, already had. Yes. They did.

*So let's back up a little bit. Before you got the architect, how did you decide what was going to go in? How did you find the people?*

I didn't know what was going in there. But the point was, I had thirty thousand. I didn't develop, at that time, the corner lot. I had a lot of guys who wanted to put a service station out there, but I didn't want a service station. So, on the back part of it, I had thirty-thousand square feet. And Sprouse-Reitz was going to take half of it.

*Did you contact them or did they contact you?*

I contacted them.

*OK. That's what I wanted to find out.*

Well, they had a store downtown which was way too small, so they wanted to expand. And they were doing a good business in Fallon at the time. So the point was, I had half of the square footage leased, and on that basis I was able to borrow the money from First Interstate Bank—\$630,000 or something like that to build the thirty thousand square feet on the back side.

*Was that already planned for what would go in there, or were you going to then lease it?*

No, no, no, no. I put in what I call small shops. And then I put in at the other end a couple of larger ones. There was an interesting story about the loan that I got. I went to the chairman of First Interstate at that time, who's the same Art Smith that now is a director [of Circus Circus]; I've known him for years. And he gave me an interest rate which was very, very favorable. And he said, "When you get ready to do this deal, why just deal with the manager of the Fallon branch." So anyway, we took the finished plans down to the manager and only had the one place leased at that point. What they do is they make an appraisal of the land and improvement, which he did, and which came out at about what I expected it would. So when I sat down with him, he said, "Normally on these commercial developments, we loan seventy percent, but we can loan up to eighty."

I said, "No way. I can see myself sitting in a committee in the senate considering a piece of banking legislation, and somebody saying, 'Here's a guy that got an eighty percent loan from First Interstate.' I don't want any part of that deal." And believe me, nobody ever laid a finger on me, ever laid a finger on me for anything that was unethical in my lifetime.

*I bet there aren't many who can say that.*

I was very sensitive about that. And so anyway, what happened is I had to put up a lot of additional money, but I had some as a result of this sale to Raley's predecessors of \$180,000. I put up some additional money and got the shopping center built. I designed the thing. I wrote and negotiated every lease personally and built out the back part of the center.

*Oh, oh. Now tell me who were some of the businesses that leased.*

Well, let's see. I can't remember all of them. [Looking at a newspaper reporting the opening of the shopping center, December 6, 1978.] Originally, there was a barber shop, The Electric Chairs, and a shoe store and, let me see, I had a little luncheon deal and an ice cream soda fountain type deal in one . . . . I had a dress shop that moved from a location downtown. I had a saddlery, a guy that would manufacture original saddles, a local guy. He was there for a while and then moved. Well, I can't remember all of them, but I had eight small shop locations. Well, my daughter opened a little bed and bath place in there; then when they moved to Carson City, I re-leased it.

*Now, did people come to you because you had signs and they saw this developing, or did you advertise, or did you talk to people?*

No, I sought them out. And one of the deals we needed was the pizza bar, which is still over there. It was the only pizza bar here in Fallon. It was a badly run place that had underage kids in there drinking, and he was closing down about that time. Originally, I was dealing with a guy who had a Round Table chain, and he was debating about whether to go into Winnemucca or here at the time, and he chose to go into Winnemucca; which, although I think he had a fair place out there, I still think it was a bad decision.

But anyway, I had the Straw Hat guy from Reno that came down here, and he went over the deal with me. He was a good business man and I don't know whether he still owns . . . he owned about three or four places. He owns some up at Lake Tahoe, and he said, "Well look, this is a good location, but

the only way I'd move down here is if I can get a reliable manager to come in. I've had too many problems with hiring managers in other locations."

I said, "I got two guys in mind; one in Sparks and one in Reno.

He said, "If one of them will come down, I'll sign a lease with you; otherwise I won't." So, then he got in touch with me. He said, "Neither one of these guys is interested in coming down there, but I know a family that are friends of mine that I think might be interested." And that guy is Roger Diedrichsen, who owns this place that came in at that time; and I got the pizza bar in there, which has been a very successful location.

*Now how long did it take to fill these places?*

Well I had them all leased by the time they were built.

*Wow! That shows what a dynamic businessman you are.*

And as I say, I was looking for, you know, a good diversity. And, as I say, I drafted all the lease documents, negotiated them all.

*And a very successful outcome with Raley's?*

Yes, right. And so, then I wound up selling the center in the last year of the low capital gains, eighteen percent. I think that was in 1986.

*Was it successful?*

Yes, it was successful. Betty and I ran it.

*You did?*

And we kept all of the accounts. And I had personal contact with all of them.

*So, that kept you busy.*

And, then we sold it.

*Why did you sell it again?*

It was the last year of the eighteen percent capital gains. It went to twenty-eight percent the next year. So, I was influenced by not having to pay out the capital gains tax on the difference between my investment costs and what I sold it for.

*Who did you sell it to and was it hard to sell?*

Well, it wasn't too hard to sell actually. I sold it to a group from Los Angeles that still owns it. They made some mistakes, and they lost practically all the original tenants that I had in there, because they scared them to death. They had a new lease proposal that was from hell to breakfast on . . . provisions and requirements. And in addition to that, they raised the rentals on them.

*Oh. They were being a little too greedy.*

Yes. And I told them before I ever sold it, I said, "You better take it a little easy. This is a small community, and these small merchants can only stand about so much rental at this point in time." And they never listened to me. So, they had some problems over there, but they're going to survive it all right. They were some wealthy people. They had a guy that owns a lot of other shopping center investments, among other things, around the country.



*Did you do well on your work and investment and all that you did to get that started? Did you come out OK on the shopping center?*

Oh yes. Oh sure. It paid off. I kept paying down the loan, and when we sold it I paid off, obviously, the balance that was due and wound up with a lot of money then. I distributed . . . I cut my daughter in. I developed a plan to help her where she didn't have any investment in it. And, what finally happened when the smoke cleared away . . . she got a check for four hundred thousand bucks.

*Oh, that was good.*

Yes. Because I had helped my son in some respects in the farming business.

*That's right.*

And I wanted to do something for her.

*Good daddy, too.*

Yes. So then, we had four hundred thousand. It's the first money I ever had to invest. I won't go into all of the ramifications, but I started an investment program which has been successful. And so actually the years totally treated me very well.

An interesting thing about that shopping center from the community standpoint, it triggered any number of developments that started filling in that strip area there. Just amazing, because the utilities were there, the Raley's store was there, and these other shops. And it seemed like, in three or four years, that whole thing had filled up.

*The way this city is growing out now . . .*

Yes, right.

*You helped start all that.*

And you know what, I never considered myself any knowledgeable real estate investor, but years ago I was always amazed at the amount of traffic that went . . . It was amazing where it all came from. And I thought to myself, "Boy that kind of traffic sometime is probably going to be worth some dough." [laughter]

*Fallon is one of the rare towns that doesn't have a freeway outside of the city. You have to come right through Fallon, and so there's very, very heavy trucking coming through the town. Can you tell me a little bit about the town's feelings? Was there ever any movement to try and divert traffic from the town?*

Yes, there was a few years ago. And the only effort that I remember was under the previous mayor's administration, when they talked about an alternate route going south towards Las Vegas, rather than having to turn down here at the Safeway corner coming through town. That alternate route is still used to some extent, but they were going to make it a major truck bypass, and that really never came to pass.

*I now want to talk a little bit about Fallon's growth and the economy. This is a very attractive area for retirees, with the lower taxes, the beauty of the area, the much lower cost of housing and people . . . I can only talk about Californians escaping the many problems of California, including the very high cost of living and people retiring here. Can you give me some thoughts about how that is affecting Fallon? I*



*know there's mixed emotions about how it's increasing the population.*

Well, the population is, I think, increasing very substantially, percentage-wise. When I first went in the senate, I think that there were, maybe, seven thousand people in the county. Today there's about twenty thousand, and it's growing a lot faster, recently, than it has in the past. A lot of these retirees—and that's what they are: they're either people from other areas or people that originally lived here and want to come back—they want to have a little place in the country where they can have a few animals, a garden, and a pasture. So, the trend in recent years is for larger agricultural acreage to go to smaller agricultural acreage in order to accommodate that. Breaking the properties up that way, and with water rights on them, they get good money and a lot more than the agricultural value of the land to do that. So, that's been a trend which will probably continue.

I call these people rural dwellers. They're not really agriculturalists. They own a little water-right land for their use. But that trend is going to accelerate in my opinion, and as long as they don't break those parcels up into too small acreage, you know, I don't see anything too much wrong with that. You still have a pleasant green belt environment, and I think that's the important thing for this community to try to preserve. I'm not speaking now as an agriculturalist, but I'm speaking as a person in the community. One of the reasons that people come here is the attractiveness of that type of an environment. And so, I think the big challenge that we have in the future from the standpoint of land use planning is how to preserve that impression with people that live here and drive through

here. And I always remember, my father who came west from Algona, Iowa, when he was a kid twenty years old or whatever, he came to the mining boom in Goldfield in 1907. He got off a train in Hazen and he took a horse-drawn stage that came through Fallon, then went on down to Goldfield. He told me that he always remembered when they came here, after this sandy road they crossed coming in from Hazen, and he lived in the green country in Iowa. He came in here, along the rivers and so on, saw these fields, and at that time they were developing into alfalfa and so on. He said it was just like a desert oasis. He said, "I never forgot it." And then he went from Goldfield up to a property that he later homesteaded up in Lassen County, California. But I think that his early memories and impressions was the reason that they moved here when I started school. This is where he decided to come.

*Yes. There is a rare beauty here.*

Yes. Yes, particularly in Nevada because it's a very arid state. So, I think it's a challenge for us. I think it was properly handled, you know; hopefully for a long time in the future, we will retain that impression of the community.

*I've heard some local people say, which is probably true, that with the Californians coming in, where they have sold a house and can buy a house, that it is raising the prices of housing here.*

Well, I don't know if it's raising the prices in housing as much as it is the land. I think, as I read the real estate ads, that the total prices of houses are still pretty reasonable in

this area. And one of the reasons they are as reasonable as they are is that when you get up into a \$250,000 or \$300,000 house you don't have very many takers in a community like this. You don't have that many takers. So, they're trying to build places that are decent for people to live in and hold their land costs down to where they could sell them accordingly. And, as I say, when you get above . . . well like this house here. I don't know what we'd price it at, but we'd price it where we begin to thin out the takers.

*So it's what the market will bear.*

Well yes, you know, the guy that's in here in a business, or that sort of thing, small business normally doesn't develop that kind of wealth to pay \$250,000 or \$300,000.

*Of course the other thing is, when these people come in it does help all these businesses like your shopping center.*

Oh, there's no question about that. It does help that. Yes. And I'd like to make one other observation if I haven't done it somewhere in our interview. I did tell you about this earlier, I think. People have asked me about the community presently as against when I was young, and I told them about the change, whether it's been desirable, beneficial, or whether it hasn't. I told them that it's an infinitely better community because of its health care. When I was a kid, we did not have health care. We had a couple of broken down doctors here and one was an alcoholic. And they didn't have any hospitals. They'd take some two-story house that had four or five bedrooms in it and open up a hospital. It was a dismal situation. I had an illness when I was . . . not

in my teens, earlier in my life. Well, I guess I'm lucky to be alive. I had a fever of 110 degrees.

*Oh my goodness.*

And the only reason that I think I'm alive is that my mother, day and night, kept cold compresses on my forehead.

*There was no good doctor or hospital?*

No, and they got a doctor, a child's doctor out of Reno, and it took him four hours to come down here in an automobile once or twice while I had that illness. But, I know that the only reason that I'm alive is because of my mother. She put those cold compresses on my forehead. Day and night.

*And what is the health care now?*

It's excellent. And they're ready to build a new hospital out here on the grounds that the county owns. They're going to start this fall. This is being built by the health maintenance organization that operates the hospital. Going to employ five-hundred people.

*Wow!*

Going to be a wonderful hospital. And it will be designed for expansion. So the health care is getting infinitely better here.

*I know they have to come down here a lot from Lander County.*

Yes.

*Because in Battle Mountain they don't do surgery and there's no hospital or doctor in Austin.*

So, I think it's primarily a lot better community because of the health care.

*Yes, and the good schools that you helped to develop.*

Yes.

*Now let's go to the military base again, because coming from just a stone's throw from Miramar, I know that the Top Gun is being moved here. I know that's definite. I also know that they're already increasing to put new buildings here and getting ready for them. And it's probably mixed emotions about their coming. What do you, from your own perspective, see about that move increasing the size and the scope of the military base here?*

I don't think there are mixed emotions about it; it's a good facility for this community. Small communities strive for clean industries. They got the best one in the world here. It's a clean industry. It's got a great future. It's the only air corridor, in my opinion, in the free world where they can do all this high speed maneuvering they have to do out east of here. They go 120 miles on a corridor that you couldn't get anywhere in the free world anymore. So I think it will become by far the most important air station that the Navy will have in the foreseeable future. And people have asked me about its future and I said, "As long as they keep carriers at sea, this will have, probably, the highest priority of any naval air station in America, which it will. Now, the other thing is that I think they'll keep the carriers. They've been reducing a lot of things, but the ability of the carriers to put out border fires is so important in the world and so flexible . . . .

*Without putting ground forces . . . .*

That's right. So flexible that I think it will be the last thing to go.

*Some of the things I heard from people who have been here for years, and who are ranchers, are just kind of negative feelings, I think, about military presence and about the use of more land and water because some of the range land was taken away. Do you think that's just a psychological feeling?*

Yes, I think so. I don't think that's a major influence in the community at all. Now the land . . . you probably heard this from some Lander County people too. See, they extended that air corridor. They had that air corridor, part of it, during World War II when they were training pilots in here. But, at a later point in time, particularly after development of the jets, they had to have additional space, which they finally got. But it runs way out there by Austin and beyond.

*Well, the Sweetwater area, I know that Ira Kent was saying that they took away—at the foot of the mountain—that whole range there, so they had to sell their sheep.*

Yes.

*And then some people told me in interviews, that they had to sell their homestead as the base was expanding.*

Well, they did expand out in Dixie Valley and they had a big hassle.

*So the people were affected?*

OK, there were individual impact situations, but I don't think that represents a community as a whole. Look . . . it's a clean industry.

*Yes. Does it bring money into the economy?*

Oh, an enormous amount of money. I would say that probably now forty to fifty percent of this state's economy is because of the base out there.

*And now with construction going on, doesn't that mean people are being hired to do the construction and more people are staying here to do the work?*

And this is an entirely new phase of construction now that's going to be coming on. See, they've developed a lot of new facilities in here besides the original training station. They've got what they call a strike university, which is a relatively new concept in the Navy. And what they found out after that Libyan strike was a lot of the squadron commanders weren't as capable as they thought they were. I remember when a secretary of the Navy was out here speaking about it one time. He said, "You know, we got all the top brass in the naval air together to decide where we wanted to put the strike university." This is a five-week program for squadron leaders. And I think it was three weeks of ground instruction and then two weeks in the air. And he said, "Over ninety percent of them said Fallon." That was the consensus in the Navy. And so they built the strike university; important facilities separately commanded—not under the base commander; separately commanded. And then the amount of money they spent out here on that electronic warfare deal out here in Frenchman's Flat going towards Austin. God, they got way over \$100,000,000 in very sophisticated tracking type facilities where they track dog fights.

*There would be no other place that you could do that.*

The equipment itself is an enormous investment. And so anyway, I can't see the end of the importance of that station. You know, once in a while, when they first came in here, we used to get bothered a little by the sound of the planes. Because of what happened over here, the Navy got smart too, and they don't do their important maneuvering over the valley here. They take off from there and then they go on out east. And then they've got other training sites; one down here . . . there's a target site down here going toward Schurz, out off to the east of the highway down there where they shoot at the ground targets and one thing or another. And they've got one out here in the sink area north of town. And so they used those kinds of areas for surface type training. And then, of course, they've got the big air corridor for the type of training that they have out east, and also the tracking equipment there at Frenchman's Station, where they can get into the actual dogfights.

*Now, staying with the economy, do you think that there will be any more mining in this area?*

There never was much mining in this county. It's not the mineralized part of Nevada. To some extent on the northern part of the county toward Lovelock, there was some. But out east here, as far as this county line is concerned, there was very little . . . some non-metallic type mining. But it's mostly centralized through the central and northeast part of the state.

*Let's get into the water situation. Do you have any involvement with the water situation, and what can you add to that?*

I have a very intimate involvement. This thing started to heat up with the battle about Pyramid Lake, early on when I was in the

legislature, and a senator. I was involved in agriculture myself, so I got heavily involved early on. I made lots of public statements at meetings and committees that were appointed and that sort of thing. Every opportunity that I had, I made public statements about things that would try to preserve water.

Last year, early in the spring, after we had come back here, some of the local people had returned from a water conference over in Colorado. And one of the things they found out was that the Southern Nevada Water Authority—which all the water in Clark County comes out of, principally off the Colorado River—was created on what’s called the Interlocal Government Cooperative Act. I talked to the manager of the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District about this meeting and he told me about it. And this thing rang a bell with me: I was the author of the act, along with another senator. The reason for it was that early on, what water recreation they had at Lahontan was being handled by the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, and they didn’t want any part of it. They weren’t in the recreational business at all, and they were concerned about the liability aspect. They finally got hit with a five hundred thousand dollar judgment with some kid who got a leg cut off or something in a boating accident out there. So, they were trying to get rid of responsibility for the recreational use. The State Park Department wanted it, but there was no mechanism at that time for bringing it about. Walt Whitaker was then the senator—that’s when we had one from each county—from Lyon County over in the Yerington area, and the back part of Lahontan was in Lyon County. So he and I authored this legislation that would permit these intergovernmental cooperative agreements. And as a result of that legislation, there was

a four-way agreement that was entered into about recreational use of Lahontan between Churchill County, Lyon County, the state of Nevada, and the United States as a federal reservoir. That’s when the park department took over the recreational aspects at Lahontan.

*Oh. Do you know the time period?*

It was back in the 1970s, as I recall. And so anyway, when he told me about this mechanism, I thought, “You know, we could create a deal like that here to address this water problem as a community.” So we got a copy of the Las Vegas document, and we got one that had just recently been put in place up on the Humboldt River, that was from Elko on down to along the river system through Battle Mountain and Winnemucca and down into Pershing County.

Between the two documents, in about three days I threw together an original proposal. We had a big meeting out here one day at the community center where we talked about doing this. The result was, we got a volunteer committee of about twelve or fourteen people that agreed to start working on a document to create the alliance. It was a very democratic process. We had about seven drafting sessions, and I amended that thing so many times I thought it was going to get worn out. [laughter] But the end result was that we created the document and then got it approved in concept by the city and the county. I went to hearings before them and wound up with what later became the official document with all the parties signatory. The Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance is the broad based community umbrella organization to protect our water in this valley for whatever the uses—wetlands, agricultural, water recharged for domestic systems, four



thousand rural wells, and so on. I have been heavily involved in that deal.

*Well, did that pass?*

Well yes, it was approved by the county and the city.

*Do they abide by it?*

Well yes, sure. It's in effect now.

The organization is in effect.

*Wow! So you have created . . . ?*

Well, I sparked it.

*Sparked it. See, I hadn't heard that from anyone. Isn't that wonderful. So how is that working?*

Well, it's working fine. It's just in the early stages of its organization, but it's the only organization, and it's here, that can speak for the whole community. Now, we've got lots of challenges with the United States in this deal, but we've got to develop a community consensus about the uses of water here that we can all agree on. If we all go in separate directions, we're never going to get anywhere. We have a tough enough time trying to protect our own interests if we're unified, but we've got to be unified. And that's the point that we're working on now, trying to develop what we call a water budget plan, looking to the future on various requirements for water to see how much water we're going to need in the future, here in this community.

*One of the problems that I have heard about in other interviews is Pyramid Lake, where they*

*have developed a huge recreation area and want water for the fish.*

Well, the endangered fish.

*The endangered fish, and the more Reno has developed, the more water Reno needs. Can you talk about any of that?*

Well, in general I can. It's just a long discourse, but it's true. And the point is that on the two river systems, the Carson and the Truckee, there just is not enough water to meet all the requirements. Nature's not giving the water to us on the two river systems, so we have to make the tough choices about the best way we can use this water and still let all these small communities survive. We have recently developed the possibility of a negotiated permanent settlement on this deal which we're now exploring with the federal government, with Senator Harry Reid who was a sponsor of some of the legislation a few years ago that required water for certain wetlands here, and also water for Pyramid Lake and so on. Hopefully, there will be concerted efforts to bring about a permanent negotiated settlement.

*So this is an ongoing committee?*

Yes, current. Just current.

*Oh, wonderful. Oh, wonderful.*

A mediator has been selected. She's coming today. She's meeting with people in the Reno area and other places tomorrow and the next day, and then she is going to spend all day on the ninth, on Thursday, here in Fallon. And so this will be her first meeting with local representatives with vested interests



in water. She wanted to determine whether all the parties are willing to support her effort to bring about a negotiated settlement. If she feels that the possibilities exist to reach a settlement, then we would begin the process of meeting with all these interested parties here through the fall to try to determine what their local requirements were and the rock bottom positions and all those things to see if an agreement can be reached. In order to do so, we will have to give up a substantial amount of agricultural water within the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, but I don't think it will decimate it. I think that we can retain a viable irrigation district and a viable wetland. It's not easy. It's an uphill battle. Indian tribes were treated badly in the past and they're trying to, in some way, you know, pay back to the Indian tribes what they can in light of the abuses of Indian tribes in years gone by and in light of other interests. And I think those things have happened. So there's a national feeling . . .

*Is that a sensitivity?*

Yes, right, among the public generally. And more particularly in recent years with the advent of this bill of Harry Reid's and one here that priorities be on water in the Truckee Meadows and sustaining Pyramid Lake and the *Cui-ui* as an endangered species, and all of those things. It's not an easy thing to try to counteract. One of the things, however . . . we feel that if we can reach an agreement with the local wetlands interests about the uses of water here, that would reduce some agricultural acreage and make more water available to the wetlands.

*Tell me what you mean by "the wetlands."*

Well, in this valley there are areas in the Carson Lake pasture, which is down below the Island Ranch, and wetlands in the Carson Sink area beyond Stillwater, that are part of the Pacific Flyway for migratory waterfowl in the spring coming from Alaska. They fly on as far south as Argentina, and in the fall they go back up toward Alaska. They come in here to rest and rehabilitate themselves on these long flights when they're migrating one way or the other. So, it's an important feature, and I will have to say that along with sensitivity about the Indian tribes, there's also more sensitivity in America today about the preservation of wetlands. I think that maybe, if we can reach an agreement with these local people on these wetlands areas here, we will have some outside support on that, not just this community.

*Well I'm glad to hear that that's going on and I'm going to keep track of it and keep in touch with you to hear more about it. Now, before we end this exceptional interview, is there any more that you want to add about the region before we close?*

No. I hope that whatever acquisitions the United States makes in here will be on the perimeters of the project so that they do not affect the greenbelt. This is the best kind of land use planning. They don't want to affect the areas where people drive and see this desert oasis in the nice environment. I hope for that. As I say, I think we can get along reasonably well with some reduced agricultural acreage without getting it so low that you just can't maintain a project. So, it just remains to be seen. I think a lot depends on the rigidity or the flexibility of the United States in the deal. They've been real hard nosed on this project. We've been at the low

end of the totem pole, and they don't care about the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, the actions and attitudes of the TCID board over the years. They really detest, the United States does, those things that happened in the past. They're trying to turn the screws every way they can.

*Have you not had good local representation to connect with the government.*

No, we haven't. Particularly, as I say, where Harry Reid has had such a high priority on all these other things. He's our senior senator. And Dick Bryan, who's the junior senator, I think he's sympathetic, but he doesn't want to get into a public confrontation with Harry Reid over his legislation. In this case, we have not had the political juice on the deal. It's not where the population is, the voting population. There's been such a high emphasis on Pyramid Lake that everything else has been secondary. And so we've been fighting, as I say, a rear guard action for years and years, and we got to try to turn that situation around if we can. Well, we're practically disenfranchised right now as far as the federal government is concerned and our representation.

*And your representation there. I'm sorry. I hope it's going to pick up, because I feel a very strong attachment to this region.*

And I feel very strongly about it, not only as a land owner but just about the community. I think more about the community's interests than I do my own private interest at this point. And my son's got a good attitude about it. He's a dandy. He loves to farm, and he said, "Well, I don't know about the future, but I'll

tell you one thing: I'm going to be the last guy to leave." [laughter]

*Oh, wonderful. [laughter] So on that note, on behalf of the Churchill County Oral History Project . . .*

I want to say one more thing not apropos of anything we discussed today: The most important day in my life was August 17, 1947 when I married Betty. She's been a wonderful wife, a helpmate, a wonderful mother, grandmother, and she is so warm and gracious to everybody who touches her life.

*I think that's beautiful, and I think you're both a fortunate couple. So now, on behalf of the Churchill County Oral History Project, I want to thank you so much for contributing all the information you have and all the time you have to this project, which will be important forever.*

Well, thank you.

*Thank you.*

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## CARL F. DOGE PHOTOGRAPHS



Carl Dodge family, Christmas 1958  
(Carl and Mary Elizabeth Dodge, son Carlson and daughter Audys)



Carl Dodge  
(original photo owned by Carl Dodge)

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## IRA HAMLIN KENT

*Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Churchill County Oral History Project, interviewing Ira Hamlin Kent at his home at 13333 Stillwater Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is April 13, 1994.*

*Good afternoon, Mr. Kent. I'm so pleased you're allowing us to interview you for the Churchill County Oral History Project. Would you first give us your full name?*

Ira Kent: Ira Hamlin Kent. I was born in Fallon, Nevada, on October 12, 1910.

*Can you tell me where your middle name comes from?*

My middle name comes from my mother's side of the family. Her name was Helen Hamlin.

*And you kept that as your name?*

Right.

*And I understand you have a nickname that everyone calls you.*

Yes, my nickname is Hammy, and how I acquired that was that when I was real small, people used to ask me my name, and I never could pronounce Hamlin, so I said Hammy, and it stuck with me all my life.

*I first want to learn a little about your grandparents, and let's start with your paternal grandfather. First, what was his name?*

Ira Herbert Kent.

*Where was he born?*

In Lylsentown, Pennsylvania, which is about twenty miles above Harrisburg.

*And what was the date of his birth, do you know?*

He was born on August 15, 1855.

*Now tell me about your father's mother, your grandmother on your father's side.*

Her name was Mary Kaiser, and she was born on January 15, 1859, in Fallon, Nevada.

*In Fallon, Nevada! So my goodness, you are a third generation?*

Yes, I am.

*Tell me how she happened to be born here, before it was even incorporated.*

Well, Fallon really didn't exist at that time. She was born down here at Stillwater. Of course, later years, Fallon was started in 1902. Of course we use the word "Fallon," because people don't know what we're talking about when we say "Stillwater," which was originally the county seat of Churchill County.

*Now, do you know how she happened to be born in the Stillwater area here in Nevada?*

Yes, her father, Charlie Kaiser, was born in Baden, Germany, in 1830. He left Germany when he was twenty years old, and he crossed the Atlantic Ocean, landing in New Orleans, the year 1850.

*When did he come to Nevada?*

He later went to California in the fall of 1850, and he located near the Yuba River in Yuba County, and engaged in mining. In 1870 he left Sacramento and traveled to Stillwater in Churchill County where he took up ranching.

*He must have been a very enterprising man. Did your grandmother talk a lot about him? Did you ever know him?*

No, I didn't. He had died before I even knew anything about him. But he was a state senator here in Churchill County for some twenty years.

*You came from a very prominent beginning here. That's your father's parents?*

No, that's my great-grandfather on my grandmother's side of the family.

*OK, and your grandma was Mary Kaiser?*

Right.

*OK. And your grandfather was the first Ira Kent?*

I.H. Kent, right.

*You're named after him?*

That's correct.

*Did your father have the same name too?*

No, my father's name was Charles Kent.

*Where and when was he born?*

My father was born here in Stillwater in the year 1881. He lived here all of his life. He took up farming as my grandfather moved more into the mercantile business. So my dad remained here on the ranch up to his death.

*And where did he meet your mother?*

She was a schoolteacher. She taught school here at Stillwater one year, and then she taught school over in Lovelock. I think, I'm not sure, but I think she taught over there for two years.

*Oh, so he took the teacher out of school?  
[laughs]*

That's right!

*And so you are then the third generation born  
[in this area].*

That's right.

*You're probably a first, one of the very few.*

Yes, I had one sister.

*Yes, I interviewed her.*

No brothers.

*Since you grew up in the Stillwater-Fallon area,  
how long did you live in Stillwater before your  
family moved to Fallon?*

Well, I lived in Stillwater up until the time  
that I went to college, which was in 1928.

*We're not going to skip over your early years.  
In other words, you stayed in Stillwater, you  
didn't move to Fallon?*

Well, we went in there just during the  
wintertime to go to high school, yes.

*I see. I understand that the Kent Store was  
physically moved when the county seat changed  
to Fallon.*

That is correct. It was moved in 1902  
to Fallon. I was born in 1910, and I went to  
grammar school here in Stillwater, and I went  
to high school in Fallon.

*OK, so then good, you'll be able to tell us a  
lot about the early days of Stillwater. From*

*your very earliest memories—when you can  
remember, not stories you were told—first,  
what kind of a house did your family live in,  
do you remember?*

Well, I don't recall the first house, because  
it burned down!

*Oh dear!*

Within the first year after I was born, in  
fact, six or seven months after I was born. So  
I don't recall it. The house that I grew up in,  
my son still lives in, right here at Stillwater.

*Really! Is that right?*

Yes. And it was built in 1911.

*Where is that?*

It's right up within about a hundred yards  
of Stillwater.

*And how far is that from your house?*

Just a mile.

*So we'll take pictures one time—either now or  
in June. That's very important. So you probably  
had no electricity or plumbing.*

Oh no. Yes, we did have plumbing. We  
did have running water in the house, because  
we had lavatories and everything like that,  
because we had a water tank that was up on  
a tower, and we pumped water up into that  
water tank, which held about two thousand  
gallons of water, so we had plenty of fresh  
running water in the house. Of course there  
was no electricity at that time.

*Who set up that water system?*

My father did.

*He was an innovative man!*

Right.

*And who built the second house after the fire?  
Who built that house?*

A man by the name of Robinson, but I don't remember what his first name was.

*What year was it that they built that after the fire?*

In 1911. It was built in the fall of 1911. And it had three bedrooms, living room and dining room, and then there was a bedroom for the cook and a kitchen and pantry and dining room for the men who were working for us.

*So that was kind of a big operation by then—by the time you were a little boy you had a big operation.*

Oh yes, very big operation. In fact, the ranch was a lot bigger in those days than it is now—quite a bit of the ranch has been sold off since that time.

*Is this all part of that same ranch?*

Yes.

*Are we on part of it? This is all part of it?*

Yes.

*Are we still in Churchill County? You're pretty far out.*

Oh yes. Churchill County goes another sixty miles east from here.

*Now going back again to when you were a little boy, what did the ranch look like? And specifically, I'm interested because we want to know what it was like before the Newlands project. What did it look like when you were a little boy? Were there many trees yet?*

Yes, there was a lot of trees. What we call the Stillwater Slough—the Carson River actually—the Carson River flowed into what they called the government pasture, down by the old Grimes Ranch, which was a lake of about a thousand acres. When it filled, it flowed to Stillwater, and we had a rock dam right back of the house where we backed up the water and irrigated all of our place. And what is called the Freeman Ranch, which was my great-grandfather's place, Charlie Kaiser had originally, and later sold it to Freeman. But there was cottonwood trees all the way up the slough there, the Stillwater Slough. They're practically all gone. People have cut them down, and there's hardly any left. And then right in Stillwater, there was a lot of cottonwood trees. In fact, there was a big grove of trees that had been planted by the early settlers that come in here. They were planted in rows. They used to have their picnics in there in the summertime, and you could drive your teams down through the rows of those trees, and they had places to barbecue and everything there, in that grove of trees, but they have all been cut down.

*Did you see that when you were a little boy? Was that still there?*

Oh yes! Yes, the trees weren't cut down until about 1925.

*You keep saying "Stillwater." Where was this little town of Stillwater in relation to your place here? Anything left?*



Yes, there's a lot of trailers up there, is about all there is—duck hunters stay there in the wintertime to hunt ducks. And there's only one person that lives there in Stillwater itself any more. But it's about two miles from right where I live back up to Stillwater.

*When did the town finally kind of disappear? Was it when the county seat was moved to Fallon?*

Oh no. Stillwater was kind of a community by itself, because it was too far to go to Fallon to do shopping. We still had a store here at Stillwater that my dad and mother ran, in conjunction with the ranch. They had dry goods and groceries there. When I went to school in Stillwater, the first grade and second grade, the schoolhouse is still in Stillwater. There was about, as I recall, about eighty children in school at that time.

*That many?*

A one-room building, and the aisle separated the first four grades from the other four grades. When one grade would be reciting, we'd listen to them, and so consequently, we got to hear from the first grade clear through the eighth.

*Oh my goodness! What was the name of that school?*

It was just the Stillwater District School.

*And if there were eighty kids, there were quite a few families here. Were those families from homesteaders, or how did all these families come into this region?*

Yes, there was a lot of them homesteaders, and there were quite a [lot of] people in the

mining business that were living here. You see, Fairview and Wonder . . . I can't even name the other mine. There were three big mines within the radius of Stillwater here. And all the freight had to be hauled from over at Wadsworth, by team, to Stillwater. And then it was transferred at Stillwater and taken on to the different mines.

*So that created a population here of workers.*

Right.

*Were some of them at that time—that was before the Newlands project—but was homesteading opening up about 1907 and on?*

Oh yes, it was. Then there was a hotel there at Stillwater. And post office and the telegraph office was there up until the time it moved to Fallon. There was also a saloon and a grocery store. There was a livery stable there, right in Stillwater.

*What year did it begin to disappear, where buildings were either moved or torn down? When did that start? Did that start when your grandfather moved the store?*

Well, it did to a certain extent, but when I started grammar school and was going to school right in Stillwater, there was quite a few people still living in Stillwater. There was one addition: it was called Cirac Addition, which had quite a few people living in. And there was a Civil War veteran living there in Stillwater at the time, Charlie Adams. He lived in the Cirac Addition. I used to go over, when I was real little, and talk to him, and he used to tell me stories.

*Now when you were a little boy, tell me what the ranch was like: How big was it? What*

*was going on? When you were old enough to recollect, describe the kind of ranch and what it was like. Just that early period.*

Well, when I was a little boy, our ranch was self-supporting. We at that time milked around 150 cows. We had anywhere from 500-1,000 pigs that we raised every year. We made all our own hams and bacons. We normally had 500-600 laying hens for eggs. During the winter months, we would have anywhere from 10-12 men working for us, feeding cattle, milking, and one thing and another. And then of course in the summer, we had probably up to 50 men, during the haying season. At that time we were farming a lot more ground than what we are today. A lot of the ranch that was being farmed in those days has been sold off. And probably farming, oh, I'd say, probably 300-400 acres more in those days than what we do today.

*You say three or four hundred more. What was the total acreage, do you have any idea?*

Well, the total acreage at that time that was being farmed was probably right around 1,500-1,800 acres.

*So you were born into a huge ranch.*

Right.

*What did it look like? Were the fields . . .*

Most of the fields were quite small, because everything had to be done with teams and it was hard to level a field and move a lot of dirt, because we had no way to move it outside [of] the tailboard and the Fresno scraper. That was about the only way

we could move dirt. So consequently, you just couldn't move that much dirt. So the fields were quite small. It wasn't until, oh, probably into the forties before we started in making the fields a lot larger.

*I want to talk about the period before the irrigation project, when you were getting the water locally here. So let's stick with the ranch before the irrigation. I have several questions to ask. Number one, you had all of these animals, and how much alfalfa hay did you grow? Was there anything else beside the alfalfa hay that you were growing?*

Oh yes, we at that time, of course, raised wheat and barley and alfalfa hay. That was just about the extent of it, until, oh, probably about, I can't remember the exact year—1913 or 1914—they built a sugar beet factory here at Fallon.

*We won't get into that yet. That's after the irrigation.*

Yes.

*I want to stick with the before, so that we can contrast the period before the irrigation. How was the irrigation done on this ranch with all these animals and crops, before the irrigation project?*

Well, we had a dam, as I mentioned before. We called it the rock dam, which is right behind Stillwater. When the Carson River flowed in the spring of the year, and as I stated before, the Stillwater Slough was a tributary of the Carson River. And we dammed that water up and had several ditches coming from that dam: one ditch that

went to the south of the dam, and another ditch that came to the north. And the ditch coming to the north irrigated all of our place and also the Freeman Ranch, which was originated by my great-grandfather, Charlie Kaiser.

*So would it all be through the ditches that you would dig, or your people on the ranch would dig to reach the crops?*

Yes.

*Were there periods of great drought?*

Well, the Carson River would stop flowing, like it does right now, anywhere around the middle of July, first of August. And consequently, there wasn't any water to irrigate with.

*What would you do?*

Well, a lot of our hay wasn't alfalfa hay in those days. It was all wild hay. We didn't have alfalfa.

*You didn't plant anything.*

No. The only thing we planted was grain. But the only hay was wild hay.

*Did a lot of it come up?*

Oh yes, wild hay would come back year after year. As soon as we'd get the water on it in the spring, it would start growing, yes.

*Was there enough during the drier periods for the animals? Was there enough, or did you suffer at all?*

No, as I recall, we never did have any problems, as far back as I can recall.

*So, Stillwater wasn't one of them that was in such urgent need of the irrigation, is that right?*

Oh no. No, in fact, the people that was on the Stillwater part of the district and the people that were on the main Carson River, they all had dams also. To build a dam, the government had to acquire our vested water rights, in order to go ahead and build the dam, because we had all the water appropriated that was on the Carson River at that time.

*Tell, for those who don't know, what does "vested water rights" mean?*

A vested water right is a water right that has been acquired, some people say, prior to 1910, and others say prior to 1902. In other words, an early appropriation of water, under your state water laws.

*I see. So that when you got water or homesteaded or got your property, there were certain water rights that came at that time?*

Right. And then of course after the dam was built, those water rights were sold by the government to the homesteaders.

*Before the project, did you have to pay for any of the water, or was it just natural?*

Oh no, it was natural.

*So you didn't have any problem with that?*

No.

*How old were you when you started to help out on the ranch?*

Oh, I don't remember for sure. I used to drive derrick, but I can't remember when it was. I was probably twelve or thirteen years old.

*Well, what about when you were a little boy? What did you do when you were a little boy?*

Oh, I used to help my mother gather the chicken eggs. That was about it. We always had a few ducks, and we'd feed them and the geese and the turkeys. My mother used to do all that, and I used to go help her. That's about all, because my dad would never ever let me get out with the men and work. He always said he was afraid of the horses, you know.

*And I understand your sister wasn't allowed to milk a cow, or to go outside where the men were.*

No. But I used to milk. Sometimes we'd get in trouble and get behind on the milking, and I could milk seven or eight cows.

*Wow! [chuckles] As you started to get a little bigger, what were some of the chores? Did your father start giving you more chores, or did you have enough workmen and you didn't have to do too much?*

No, I didn't have to do too much, because like I said, we had two men that milked the cows, and we also had a man that did all the chores. Of course going to school, you just didn't have that much time.

*How did you get to school?*

I walked. Of course we went to school in Stillwater, it was only less than a quarter of a mile to go to school.

*Oh, OK, so it was close.*

But then later when they built the new schoolhouse, which is about a mile-and-a-half above Stillwater, I walked part of the time, and then I rode horseback part of the time. I was in the fifth grade before I went to school up there.

*I see. That's about when your sister was going up there, and going on a horse, is that right?*

Yes. The first four grades, I went to school in Stillwater.

*And was that when there were a lot of kids, or was that later?*

No, there were a lot of kids. There were quite a lot of kids, even when they opened the new schoolhouse at Stillwater.

*And your mother was a teacher, right? Had been a teacher?*

Yes, she was a teacher one year here at Stillwater, and two years in Lovelock.

*Was that a help, having a mother who was a teacher?*

Oh, it was particularly when I got in high school.

*Yes, but when you were little, did she see that you did your work and check it?*

Yes, she used to help me with my work. Particularly when I got in high school, she was exceptionally good with mathematics.

*I want to know a little bit about, first, your dad: what kind of a personality, what kind of*

*a person, what kind of a father, so we get to know him a little bit.*

Well, he was very, very well-liked. The men that worked for him all thought an awful lot of him. He was very highly respected in the Stillwater area.

*Did he get involved in some of the community activities or politics?*

Yes, he run for state senator. He was in the Nevada State Senate—I think the year was 1918—for two years. I went to grammar school over at Carson City that one winter.

*Oh, you all lived there? Did you all go there to live?*

Yes, we all lived there during the legislative session, and I went to grammar school there.

*Did you like that, going there?*

Well, no, because coming from a little place like Stillwater, and then going to Carson . . . Of course Carson wasn't very big at that time either! But it felt big, anyway—seemed big.

*Now let's go back a little bit. You said there was also a store that your mother and father managed. Was that store in existence when you were born, the Stillwater store?*

Oh yes, but I don't remember too much about it.

*Did it close before you were a teenager?*

Oh yes. Yes, I don't know exactly when it *did* close, but I don't recall hardly anything about it. I know where the building was—it

burned down in later years. But I knew where the building was, and that's about all.

*And then they physically moved that to Fallon?*

No. No, it was still here. When they left here, this store was still here. And then they had the store in Fallon, which was built in Fallon.

*I see, someone told a wrong story. I read they . . .*

No, it was built in Fallon. And the Stillwater store that was here, burned down.

*Now I want to stay with your childhood a little bit more. What kind of fun did kids have here in Stillwater? Did you have time for some fun?*

Well [chuckles] about the only thing that we used to do, we used to play marbles and had a game we called "dare base."

*I've never heard of that game—describe it.*

Well, you choosed up sides and you had one team on one side and one team on another, and you're separated probably by about, oh, thirty, forty yards. You had a line out in front of that where everybody was standing, and somebody from the other team would come down. Well, if you could catch them before they got back to their own line, then they had to go in what we called "the pot." And the only way you could get out of the pot was if somebody who was real fast could run down there and touch your hand, and then you could get out of the pot. Oh, we used to play that an awful lot during recess and noon hours.

And then another thing we used to do, we used to choose up sides and hunt magpies.

*What's magpies?*

Oh, a magpie is a predator bird that eats lots of the bird eggs— particularly pheasant and quail and duck eggs. We tried to control them. And so the school would choose up sides to see who could get the most magpie eggs. And we'd go robbing the magpie nests all around the valley here.

*What would you do with the eggs?*

Oh, we'd just break them up after we brought them back and showed them to the teacher, that we got the eggs. Then she'd put it down. It was quite a thrill, or a lot of excitement, anyway. Every weekend, everybody was looking for magpie eggs.

*You're the first one I've heard tell that. And that was to control the population of the magpies?*

That's right.

*Now, I know from reading about you, that you are an avid sportsman. We're not going to go through the whole thing—we're going to stay with your childhood—we'll get into a lot of that later. What started you in your love of hunting?*

Well, my father liked to hunt, and I think in those days hunting and fishing was probably your only recreation you had. He kind of insisted that you learn to hunt.

*How old were you when he took you and taught you?*

I was seven years old. He bought me my first shotgun.

*OK, I want you to tell me in detail about that experience.*

He got me a 410 gauge shotgun for Christmas when I was seven years old. We had a little pond that's about a half a mile here from the house. So he said, "Well, you can take the shotgun now and go down there by yourself, and see if you can get a duck." There was ice on the water, but there happened to be some ducks there, and I sneaked up on them, and I shot and I got one duck. and I broke its wing, and I didn't want to get my shoes wet or muddy, so I took my shoes off and chased that duck around out there on the ice, and finally caught him. My feet were pretty near frozen when I got back off the ice, but I was one proud boy!

*Now, before he told you to go and do that, did he teach you safety and how to handle your gun?*

Oh definitely.

*Did you have a close relationship with your dad?*

Oh yes. Of course he was always so busy, it was hard for him to get away to go fishing. In the fall we used to do a lot of duck hunting. And then, of course, when I was small, before I probably went to grammar school, we had a Chinese cook by the name of Toy, and he cooked for us for a number of years. He cooked for all the men, even when we had fifty men—he did all the cooking. But we had an Indian girl to help him, who did the dishes for him. But anyway, after lunch, pretty near every day, all spring and summer, he'd say to my mother, "Well, Hammy and I are going fishing," and we used to go down below the house there about two hundred yards, and there was a big hole there in the Slough, and we could always catch catfish. We'd go down there and we'd probably catch forty or fifty



catfish and a few perch and a few bass were in there. And then Toy would skin them all and have them for dinner.

*So it was your food!*

When we'd get enough, we'd have some to eat, yes.

*Now, did your sister ever go fishing?*

No, I don't recall her ever going fishing with us.

*It was the two buddies, you and your dad.*

Well, Toy the Chinaman and my dad used to take me down in what we called the sinks. We used to go down there fishing, when I was real little, and catch catfish.

*So part was relaxation, part was food.*

That's right, yes.

*What other kind of hunting did you begin to do through your teen age with your dad?*

Well, nothing, except ducks and geese, until I was oh, probably sixteen, seventeen years old before I started doing any other hunting.

*In those early days, is that when you began to have a love for that sport?*

Oh yes.

*The whole association of . . .*

Yes, and my father always made me go hunting. Until I was a teenager, I always had to go hunting by myself.

*Oh, by yourself?*

Yes, he would never let me hunt with anybody, because that way, he always said that a couple kids get in trouble.

*Oh, one could accidentally shoot the other.*

That's right.

*Ah, so he was a smart man—protective of his children.*

Yes. Another experience that I had, that I would like to mention: In 1918 we had rabies here in the valley. All the coyotes had rabies, and we had quite a few cows get rabies, coyotes had bit them. Dad had to destroy our dogs, because he was afraid that they'd get bit and then bite somebody. But anyway, I was going to school one morning, and I was just about, oh, a hundred yards from the school house—in fact, I was about seventy-five yards from the saloon, and this rabid coyote come down the road and took after me. And there was two government trappers sitting on the front porch of the saloon there, and they saw the coyote coming, and they had their rifles there, and they shot him.

*Oh, my gosh! Now, what school were you going to?*

That was right there at Stillwater.

*So you were still in school here.*

Yes, I was still—I'd have been, eight years old, I'd have been in the second grade.

*Oh, so you were little.*

Oh yes, 1918.

*Wow, were you scared?*

Yes.

*Was that scary?*

Oh, I'll say it was.

*Did you know anyone who had rabies?*

No, I don't know of anybody that got bit by them.

*Now I know you said you had lots of workers, about fifty. Do you remember the kind of a mixture of men? Was there a mixture of different ethnic groups? Was there a mixture of places from where they came? Did you get to know any of that?*

Well, yes. The bulk of our employees were Indians from the reservation.

*Is that right?*

You see, the Indian reservation is just up the road here a few miles. We had a few white men that worked for us year-round. Most of the Indians—in fact *none* of them at that time, worked year-round. They just worked during the summertime, with haying and things like that. But the white men that worked for us, we had Portuguese that milked cows for us.

*Where'd they come from?*

They came from Portugal, and they lived here at the ranch.

*Did they come over to work? Did they hear about work here?*

Yes. Yes, they come over to work over here in the States. And they were real good milkers.

*Did people send information over to Portugal saying they needed helpers?*

That I couldn't tell you.

*Couldn't tell. But you had Portuguese. I hadn't heard that.*

Oh yes, we had four or five.

*Just the men, without families?*

They were just single men. Of course the Indians, they all lived at the reservation, but they would come down. We had breakfast at six o'clock in the morning, and they would be down here at six for breakfast, and then we had dinner at noon, at twelve o'clock, and supper at six o'clock. After supper—they either came down with a horse and buggy or horseback—and then they'd go back home up to the reservation.

*Did you eat with the men?*

No, we didn't. My mother and dad and I and my sister ate by ourselves.

*But the cook would bring you the food, so your mother didn't have to do all that cooking.*

That's right.

*I want to know a little about the Indian reservation. First, did the Indian children go to school with you, or did they have their own schools?*

They had their own school, but there was a family that their father was part white, and that was after the schoolhouse moved up above Stillwater there. And they lived just about two hundred yards from the schoolhouse, and that family all went to school with us. Otherwise, all the Indians went to school up where the Indian mission was, and the Indian schoolhouse up there.

*Oh, all right, tell me, I had not heard about the Indian mission.*

Yes, they had an Indian mission. It was Baptist.

*So they had like a Baptist school where they had the children go?*

No.

*Was it a public school?*

It was a public school for the Indians, yes.

*I see, it had nothing to do with the Baptists.*

No. But they had a Baptist church there.

*OK, so it was a government school, just like yours.*

Right.

*So they were separated.*

Right.

*What did the Indian reservation look like then? I see very modern houses when I drive by.*

Well, most of the houses up there at that time were just one-room cabins, is what they amounted to—probably ten-by-twelve up to maybe twelve-by-sixteen cabins; normally just one room; and they slept on the floor; and they used rabbit skins made from jackrabbits, blankets, which were very, very warm. We had a couple of Indians here that I really was very close to. They used to take me in their house. Otherwise, most of them didn't.

*Mostly was it separated communities, with the white and Indians?*

Oh, not necessarily, no.

*Did the Indian kids play with the white kids?*

Well, no, because see, they went to school up there and we were down here.

*So you don't wander around.*

We were too far apart. See, up there at the Indian school, it's probably five miles, roughly, from Stillwater. So we was too far apart. But the Indian boys and one Indian girl that went to school right there by our schoolhouse, we used to play together. In fact, we've been friends all of our lives. In fact, they're all passed away now, except two of them. In fact, I was down and visited with one of them here just a few weeks ago—he's a little younger than I am, but we've kept in touch.

*Besides working on the ranches, what other ways did the Indians earn their living?*

That was just about it. Yes, there was two big ranches: our ranch and the Freeman Ranch, that employed quite a few people.

And they employed practically all the Indians off the reservation. Or, there was a few of the Indians that did work up toward Fallon on some of those ranches, but I would say that this ranch and the Freeman Ranch employed the bulk of the Indians, yes.

*How big was that Indian reservation?*

You mean in square miles?

*No, in terms of population, how many houses, how many families.*

Gosh, I couldn't . . .

*Hundreds? Or less?*

Oh, I would say probably there was three or four hundred Indians up there.

*That many?*

Yes.

*About how many are up there now?*

I haven't the slightest idea. I would say probably fifteen hundred.

*That much?*

Right. I could be mistaken. I'm not sure about that.

*Where's the bulk of their living quarters? I just drove through and saw a little bit.*

Well, it's all through the reservation. They've got the homes all through the reservation.

*Have there been any problems through the years, or do the people live peacefully all together?*

Oh yes, there's never been any problems to my knowledge. Somebody might get drunk, and something like that, and wreck his car, but I mean that's normal for white or any people.

*Do any of them start their own businesses or make a living . . . I know there's one, the artist on the reservation who's quite a prominent artist, who has the gallery.*

Yes. Well, there's a few of them that have been carpenters, and there's some that have been painters. But most of them follow farm work. Of course a lot of the younger generation now, they're working in all kinds of places.

*Going off to college?*

Yes, and working in the banks and things like that.

*Good. OK, they're moving into the town.*

I'm speaking about back thirty, forty years ago, even then there was a few of them that did work commercially.

*And there are probably a lot more opportunities for education?*

Oh yes. You see, then, about the only school was the Indian schools for them to go to. Now they can go practically anywhere they want to go.

*When did the Baptist mission go into the reservation?*

That I couldn't tell you.

*As long as you can remember?*

As long as I can remember, yes. And I can remember going up—the old road going to Fallon used to go right up by the Indian mission and on into Fallon. I can remember going to Fallon in a buggy and a horse, and it'd take one day to go up, and we'd do our shopping and come home the next day. My grandfather and grandmother lived there in Fallon, and we would stay with them. But the mission was there then, and I was probably only five or six years old.

*So are most of the Indians on the reservation Baptist, or only some?*

Well, they used to be. Now, I don't know exactly.

*I know a lot of the ranches and homes hired Indian women to do the laundry, and still do.*

Oh yes. I remember we had an Indian girl—of course, she wasn't a girl—her name was Maggie, that came down pretty near every day. Her husband's name was Little Jake, and he worked here on the ranch, and she used to come down and did all the washing. She did washing for the men besides the cookhouse, and for our family. She was a real large woman and they used to come down in a spring wagon. Jake would sit up on the front seat of the wagon, and she would just sit on the floor in the back. [laughter] Another thing I recall, she used to love to eat gophers.

*Oh my gosh!*

She'd give me five cents for a small gopher, and ten cents for a big gopher. I used to take a bucket with water and go around and try to drown the gophers and get them to come up and catch gophers for her. Oh, maybe I'd get a couple or three, and she'd give me ten cents a piece or five cents, whichever.

*That's funny. You started to say something that intrigued me about your grandparents living in Fallon. Did they move there when the store was started in Fallon?*

Yes, right, in 1902. They lived there till their death.

*Did they build a house?*

Yes, they built a home there, right.

*And then you said you would go in with a horse and wagon?*

Yes, and then we'd stay there. They had a corral right there in town where we'd leave the horse. Then in later years when Dad was even freighting from Fairview and Wonder, they used to drop freight off there and leave the horses there at the corral.

*Where was their house located?*

Oh, it was on Center Street about, oh, a hundred yards from the store.

*So it was close, right in town. Is it still there?*

No, it was sold after their death. The house is still in existence. It's down in Old River District. Some people have it.

*It was moved?*

Moved, yes.

*Now, is the store that's in Fallon the original store?*

Yes, that's the original store.

*When your grandparents died, then did your father run the store in Fallon? Who ran it after they died?*

My uncle, Ira L. Kent. That was my dad's other brother.

*OK, your uncle was also out here.*

Yes, he was active in the store *all* the time. My dad was just active in the ranch here at Stillwater. And he [Uncle Ira] ran it after their death. In fact, he was running it, more or less, before they passed away.

*Did your father ever run it?*

No.

*When you would go into Fallon to visit, did you go into the store?*

I can't remember. Well, I do, yes and no. I remember going in there, but I can't remember anything particular about it.

*Nothing special to remember?*

Nothing special about it, no.

*Do you always remember taking trips into Fallon?*

Well, of course, see, I wasn't born until 1910, so it was probably 1915 or 1916 before I ever went into Fallon that I can remember.

*Of course. When you would go in, what would it look like?*

As I recall, I remember the railroad tracks, and I remember the courthouse. There used to be right there at the intersection of Maine and Williams Avenue, a water fountain there where you water your horses at. There was a rooming house there that belonged to Sanfords on Maine Street. I can remember there was two or three saloons along there on the west side of the main street. And that's just about all I can recall.

*OK, we'll go more into it when you went in for high school. Back to the ranch and to kids' fun: Did you go swimming in the ditches?*

Yes, I learned to swim in a ditch. [chuckles] Of course that was after the irrigation project. We had a flume that went across the slough, and the water run real swift. We'd get in the top of that flume and the water would run swift enough that even though you couldn't swim, it would take you through the flume, and the flume was probably a hundred and fifty feet long.

*When was that?*

Oh, that was probably about 1918 or 1919.

*So that was after the irrigation project?*

Yes, that was after the irrigation project. I don't remember what year it was, 1920 or around there, maybe before that. I guess it



was 1918, they thought there was oil here in the valley, and they dug a lot of oil wells—speculation, I think, mostly oil speculation. And I recall one of them that was out here in what we call “the pass.” Tex and Glenn Reynolds—they came from Oklahoma. And they were working on that oil rig. I went over to get the mail, and as I started across the street there, it was dirt and dust, I saw a couple of greenbacks there, and I picked them up—it was two \$20 bills! And so I went into the store to get the mail and I told Miss Greenwood who ran the store that I just found these two bills. I said, “You keep them here, and if somebody comes along and claims them, you give them to them.”

*Boy, you’re honest!*

So a couple of days after that, Tex Reynolds who was working out here on the oil rig come in and he told Miss Greenwood that he had lost his pay check. She asked him how much it was. He said, “Well, I had two \$20 bills.” “Well, Hammy found them, and here they are.” So she gave them to him, and he handed her back one twenty and he said, “Give this to Hammy.”

*[admiringly] Oh!*

But I kind of got off onto another thing there.

*That’s all right. The oil, that is something important. Did your family ever speculate in oil?*

Not to my knowledge. But I was getting back to swimming. They also dug an oil well right there in Stillwater. They hit hot water,

and then a geyser. When they hit this geyser, it scalded a couple of men—it didn’t kill them.

*Was this when they were digging for oil?*

Yes. Later, it was just a year or two after that, they made a big outdoor swimming pool from this water.

*Oh, really?*

And we used to go over there and go swimming every evening.

*Oh, what fun! How big was it?*

It was about fifty feet wide and about a hundred and fifty feet long.

*Wow! Was there grass around it? Cement around it? What did it look like?*

The swimming pool itself was a cement swimming pool, and it started out at about eighteen inches deep and went to about six feet deep.

*Oh, any pictures, any photographs?*

It had concrete walk all the way around it, and then they had another room over there where you’d go over and take a shower before you went swimming and after you got out of the swimming pool if you wanted to.

*Did they charge you to go?*

Yes. I can’t remember how much it was right now, but it didn’t amount to much.

*Did people come in from Fallon?*

Oh yes, Nina remembers coming down to Stillwater, going swimming. Oh, people used to come from Fallon and all over to go swimming here.

*Oh, what fun! Now this was outdoors, or indoors?*

It was outdoors, but they did have an indoor swimming pool, but it was deep. They would never let us kids swim in there. It was probably, oh, four foot deep, probably, to about eight feet deep.

*Oh, I hope I can find photographs of that.*

I can show you where that is. But the old outdoor one was all filled-in years ago.

*How long did that stay in existence, about?*

Oh, the outdoor one probably stayed in existence, oh, six or seven years, maybe longer. And then the health department got after them for not draining the pool, you know, and all the things you have to do. So he just filled it in.

*Did any of the Indian kids come to swim?*

No, I don't ever recall many of them coming.

*Did you ever go ice skating on the sloughs?*

No, I never did ice skate. I don't know why. I guess I just never ever learned to ice skate.

*Not something that appealed to you?*

No, it just never appealed to me.

*Do you have any recollection of . . . I know you were very, very young when the Lahontan Dam was completed. You were only four. But do you have any recollection of anything.*

No, not a bit.

*What's your earliest recollections afterward? Did you go and visit? Did you go to the Lahontan Dam recreation center?*

I don't have any recollection of it at all.

*As you were growing up, did you begin to see changes due to the Newlands project? Did they start to create different ditches? Did new things start to happen during your years on the ranch here, until you went to Fallon?*

Well, there was more and more people. There was lots of places, forty and eighty acres, around the valley here.

*The homesteading?*

Homesteading, yes. They bought the water rights from the government and took up 40 or 80, and some of them, 160 acres. The bulk of them are around 80-acre places. And they could raise a good family at that time, and live pretty comfortably.

*Did you get to meet any of them? Did the schools increase in kids?*

Well, the town schools did, but they didn't down here. I would say the Stillwater School started to fall off about the time that I got out of grammar school, which was 1924. There was only two of us graduated from the eighth grade. People had started moving away.

People started buying up their neighbors' [property] and things like that.

*Oh, in other words, one would have eighty, and then buy the next neighbor's?*

Right.

*I see. When did that start?*

Oh, it probably started in the late twenties. And then, of course, after we went through that bad Depression in the early thirties . . .

*Oh, we'll get to that after.*

It really escalated then.

*Did your family homestead?*

No. My grandfather bought this place from the Sanfords. The present ranch that we have today is part of that, and then I have some acreage that belonged to my Great-grandfather Kaiser, where I bought in 1935. Then I also have an acreage that belonged to Cirac, who owned the hotel and the saloon; and also from a person by the name of Paris who homesteaded eighty acres.

*Paris, just like the city in France?*

Yes, he was a Frenchman. He homesteaded or took up eighty acres and bought the water rights from the government. That was in 1915. He couldn't make a go of it, so he borrowed four thousand dollars from the Bank of America, and then left the country. They never did know where he went to.

*Oh, my goodness!*

Anyway, I also own that at the present time.

*What year did you buy that?*

Oh, I bought it about ten years ago.

*That's pretty recent.*

Yes.

*So now we're going to go back. I did not ask you, I want to know about your mother. What kind of a woman and a mother was she? Tell me a little so I can get to know her a little bit.*

Well, she was born in Sierra Valley, and she went to grammar school and high school in Sierra Valley in Loyalton. I'm not positive, but I think she went one year to the University of Nevada, and she also went to Stanford. Then she taught, as I said before, grammar school in Lovelock and Stillwater. She and Dad were married in 1907. She used to go out with Dad and do a lot of riding out to the mountains. They used to run mustangs.

*Is that right?*

Yes, catch mustangs, rope them.

*She did that? She was like a cowgirl?*

Yes, she used to like to ride. And then, of course, after I come along, that kind of curtailed all that. [laughter] But she was a strict mother, very strict. You toed the mark, believe me!

*Was she stricter than your dad?*

Oh yes, by far.

*She was the disciplinarian?*

Yes. Yes, Dad would hardly ever say anything to me, unless you *really* got out of line. [laughter] I remember—speaking of getting out of line—I remember I was probably six or seven years old, another boy that lived here on the ranch, his dad worked here on the ranch, and he was maybe a year older or younger than I was, and we decided one day we was going to build a fire. So we [laughs] lit one of the hay mangers afire. Then we couldn't get it out.

*Oh my!*

And Dad just saw it or something, or some of the men did, and they got it out. And we run and he went home. I run in the house. I remember I hid under the sofa. Daddy come in the house—boy, he was mad! He drug me out from under that sofa and he sure did give me a whipping! [laughs]

*Well, you could have created a lot of damage!*

That's about the only time I can really remember that he really ever got after me.

*What were some of your mother's main interests?*

Oh, she used to love to hunt arrowheads. And of course she played bridge. They had a bridge club in Fallon—that was a little bit later on when she had a car and could drive to Fallon. And she belonged to the P.E.O.

*Did you kids go to hunt arrowheads with her?*

Well, Ethel did. I never did. I never did get much interested in it, until later years. Yes, I

don't know, there was always something else I wanted to do.

*Yes, hunt or fish?*

Yes. Somebody'd say "hunting," or "fishing," I was ready to go!

*Do you remember when your sister was born, because you're five years older.*

Oh yes, very plainly. I remember we had an ice house. At that time they used to cut all their ice there on the slough in the wintertime, and had a big ice house. It was probably, oh, 20 feet deep and 12 feet wide, and probably 20 feet high, and they'd fill that with ice every winter, and covered it with sawdust to keep it from thawing. I was out there at the ice house with my uncle, and that was my mother's brother. He disappeared and he said, "You stay here." Pretty quick he come back and he said, "You've got a baby sister." I can remember that just as plain. So he took me to the house.

*And you saw the little baby?*

Yes. I remember that all right.

*Did you have to help take care of her a little bit as the big brother?*

Not that I remember. [laughs]

*Was there someone to help your mother?*

No.

*Your mother took care of her, and you were busy outside.*

Yes, getting in trouble.

*So you didn't get in fights with her or anything?*

Oh, I suppose we did, but I don't recall.

*You were quite a bit older.*

Oh yes, I was five years older.

*Now, going through your school years, you went through the eighth grade here?*

Right, in Stillwater. I graduated from Stillwater Grammar School.

*As you were going through school, did you begin to determine areas of the schoolwork that you liked and areas that you didn't? Areas that you were more talented at? What were you discovering by the time you reached the eighth grade?*

Well, really, nothing, I would say, up through the eighth grade, because I don't know, you're too young to make up your mind on anything you want to do.

*Sure. Did you enjoy the ranching aspect?*

Yes, I did. I used to like to ride. Yes, I used to go out to the mountains with the buckaroos in the summertime and do quite a bit of riding.

*By the time you were in eighth grade—let's see, how old were you then? About twelve?*

Let's see. No, I would have been fourteen in October—I was thirteen when I graduated.

*So by the time you reached thirteen, what were your responsibilities on the ranch? Were you given any special areas?*

No, nothing special. Used to help whenever they needed some help—little things, you know, around. And I used to help with the cattle. I used to ride quite a bit.

*Did you like that? Was that your favorite?*

Oh, I loved that.

*Where did they do the branding?*

Oh, we did the branding here at the ranch.

*Did your father begin to teach you that?*

Oh yes, sure. And then we run sheep at that time, too. We ran more sheep than we did cattle, at that time.

*Tell me about that.*

Well, we ran two bands of sheep, which was about thirty-five hundred ewes, and we ran them in two bands.

*Where?*

In the Stillwater Mountains here.

*Was that range land?*

Yes, that's BLM [Bureau of Land Management] range. Of course at that time, it wasn't BLM, it was . . .

*Just open?*

Yes, open range.

*Was there any competition? Were others doing the same thing?*

Well, yes, you used to have competition from other sheep operators. They had these sheep outfits that would move. They'd come out of Idaho and go clear down into Arizona in the wintertime.

*Oh! That far?*

Yes, they'd trespass on us. And of course in those days, the way you controlled the water, you filed on the water and appropriated your spring, under the state law. If you had a spring appropriated, under the state law, you controlled all the grazing within a three-mile area of that spring. So Dad appropriated these waters so that they overlapped one another. If one of these outfits got in on ours, they could have them arrested for trespassing, see.

*So, did he ever have to do that?*

Yes. I recall a couple of cases.

*Is that right? Did they give you any trouble?*

Oh no. You go in the county courthouse and you swear out a warrant for their arrest for trespassing. And then the sheriff would go out and serve it.

*Isn't that interesting. Was it because they didn't know? They'd be coming through . . .*

Oh no, they didn't care—just didn't care.

*About how many sheep did you have?*

We had about thirty-five hundred ewes.

*Now tell me, with the ranch, where did you sell the animals? Did you sell it for wool, for meat?*

Of course we sheared the wool. The wool was sold.

*Was the shearing done here?*

Yes, it was usually hauled into Fallon and put on a railroad car. There'd be wool buyers come around and buy the wool. And then the lambs, the bulk of them went to San Francisco and Santa Cruz. Walter Schilling, they had a big slaughterhouse down there in Santa Cruz. And also Moffitt—they had a big packing house in San Francisco. They had buyers that come in here.

*I see, they'd come right to your ranch?*

Oh yes, we had a scales here, and the lambs or the cattle would be weighed right off the scales, and then we'd deliver them into Fallon for them.

*Big operation. Now, who actually did the shearing of the wool, and how?*

That was contractors. There'd be contractors come through the country. They'd call ahead or write a letter ahead, and set up a date when they'd be here to shear, because they moved right around the country, and that's all they did.

*I'd never heard that!*

Oh yes, that's the way all the people sheared in those days.

*Oh my goodness. Did you ever watch them?*

Oh yes, sure.

*How'd they do it?*



That was all done by hand in those days. Of course now they do it by electric shears. It was all by hand in those days.

*Now how many needed to work on one? Did one have to hold it while one cut it?*

Oh no, one guy holds it and shears it at the same time.

*Oh my goodness!*

Oh yes, it's quite a knack.

*Oh, I would say!*

There'd usually be eight to ten shearers in a crew.

*Wow. Now, you had a lot of sheep.*

They would shear up to a hundred sheep a day, apiece—a good sheep shearer would.

*How long does it take the sheep to raise another . . .*

One year.

*Every year?*

You shear them every spring.

*How long did your father's ranch keep on with the sheep and the wool?*

Oh, we had the sheep up until World War II. World War II, the Navy had the base out here. That's when the Navy base went in over here. They had air-to-ground gunnery. In other words, one plane would fly, pulling a target behind it, and then the other plane

would come in and shoot at that target. And they were shooting against these mountains. So the Navy took all the use of all these mountain ranges where we run our sheep during World War II. So for five years we had no place to run our sheep. So when they took it, we sold all the sheep.

*Oh, because that was federal land?*

Yes.

*I see, so then you had to sell them.*

Yes.

*Were you able to sell them easily?*

They all went to California, the sheep did. But then after the war, instead of going back in the sheep business, it was awful hard getting sheepherders. We went into cattle fully—cattle, instead of back into sheep.

*Did you ever sell the sheep for meat?*

Oh yes, sure, the lambs. Yes, you see, you get about 50 percent at that time—I don't know how it runs nowadays—but we had about 50 percent twins. So in other words, say 3,500 ewes, well, you'd probably end up with, oh, probably 4,500 lambs. Of course you kept part of the ewe lambs for replacement for your old ewes, you know. And then of course you culled all your old ewes out, and they all went for mutton, and then your lambs all went for your lamb.

*Who actually was responsible for the sheep business here?*

My dad.

*Was he the main one who supervised all the workers?*

Oh yes.

*He was the one who knew everything?*

That's right.

*So he was pretty smart in ranching?*

Yes.

*Was it something that he learned from his . . .*

Well, from his father.

*So he always knew, just like you learned, from yours.*

Yes, that's right.

*Did you ever work with the sheep?*

Well, yes, I used to tend camp for them.

*What does that mean?*

Well, we had two shearers and two bands of sheep. They stayed in the mountains, and then according to state law, they can only be by themselves for five days. And so every fifth day, we'd take groceries to them, because they had no way to get groceries. I'd take the groceries out and spend all night, usually, with them, and then come back the next day.

*Did you use Basques?*

No, we always had white men. We could never speak any other language except

[laughter] English, so it was kind of tough to hire somebody that couldn't . . .

. . . *speaking your language. So that was an interesting period.*

Yes.

*So you had the sheep. You mentioned you had lots and lots of pigs. What did you do with the pigs?*

Oh, I don't know, they were hauled into Reno. There was two packing houses in Reno: Nevada Packing Company, and Humphrey Supply. We used to send the pigs into Reno. We'd sell them, and they'd go to Reno, and that's where they'd be butchered, and hams and bacons made out of them at Reno.

*That's the convenience of being here—you're so close to Reno. You're not so isolated.*

Yes. Of course we're eighty miles, so it isn't that close, from the ranch here.

*Oh, that's right, you're pretty isolated.*

Yes, quite a ways.

*That's right! [laughter]*

See, everything had to be shipped out by rail in those days.

*Then you had to get your things to Fallon to the railroad. So did you use big trucks?*

Oh no.

*What did you use?*

The cattle, we drove them. The sheep, we drove them.

*Oh, OK, you were on horses and you would drive them in.*

Right.

*That's before it was a big city. That must have been quite a scene.*

Oh yes, railroad came into Fallon. They had what they called the stockyards there. They'd load all the sheep or the cattle or whatever it might be, on the railroad cars.

*Oh, what a picture! How long would it take you to drive them in there?*

Two days.

*Incredible! Are there any pictures?*

No, we don't have any pictures at all.

*Would you just camp on the ground, or did you have a wagon?*

No, we used to go up to what they called the Ayers Place, and their ranch was just to the west of Nygrens. We had arrangements made with them, and we'd leave the cattle or the sheep or whatever it might be, there overnight, and they'd feed them. Then the next morning, take them on into Fallon to load on the railroad car and then go on out.

*Would you sleep at the Ayers and eat there?*

I don't recall what they did—I imagine they must have. I never did help drive any of them in.

*OK, you didn't do that. It's very picturesque in my mind, to envision all that.*

*You mentioned something about turkeys. Were turkeys raised on your ranch?*

Oh yes. Dad always raised anywhere from 500 to 1,000 turkeys.

*Oh my gosh! Tell me about that.*

Well, turkeys, about half of them were usually killed for the Thanksgiving market. The other half for Christmas market. The I.H. Kent Company, my father's dad, they bought pretty near all the turkeys that was raised here in the valley. There was lots of turkeys raised here in the valley. And they shipped *them* out by railroad car. And they went to San Francisco, mostly. It was a big business here.

*So all the local people would mainly sell the turkeys to your . . .*

Grandfather.

*To Grandfather, and they didn't have to worry how to sell them.*

No.

*I see. And how were they sold? Who killed them? Did they have to be cleaned?*

All you did was, they stuck them to kill them, you know—they stuck them with a sharp knife in the top of the head, which killed them instantly. And then when you stick them like that, it makes them kind of loosen up their feathers. Then you picked them dry. That's all you had to do, was just pick them, and hang them to cool out.

*Who would do that?*

Well, normally the ranchers themselves did it.

*Well, who did it on your ranch?*

Oh, everybody. I remember I did it, and I remember Dad doing it, and my mother. Oh, there was two or three of the Indians up there that used to come down and help pick.

*My goodness. So that was quite [a production]. And then of course you kept some for yourselves.*

Oh yes.

*Tell me how you celebrated your Thanksgiving.*

Well, Thanksgiving we use to go up to Fallon to my grandparents for Thanksgiving dinner.

*How long did it take to get there?*

Well, after, oh, I'd say probably 1916, we had a car, and we'd drive it down. But even then, it'd take quite a while to get to Fallon.

*Did you have to get all dressed up?*

Oh, I should say I had to dress up! Had the whole family: my dad's sister, Mrs. Wallace, and she had three children; and Ira L.—that was Dad's brother—there was three boys and a girl in that family; and then of course they always had some friends come in. There was usually thirty to thirty-five there for Thanksgiving. I don't think I was over about, oh, maybe ten or twelve years old, they started making me carve a turkey.

*You're kidding!*

They always had two big turkeys to carve, and my cousin who was two years older than I, he had to carve one, and I had to carve the other one.

*Did you botch it the first time? Or did you do a pretty good job? [laughter]*

Well, I don't remember whether I did or not, but I got pretty good at it. But Christmas we always had at home.

*Oh, tell me about that.*

Well, Christmas, Mom always had a Christmas tree. And of course there was just the four of us, and Christmas was always at home. We never did go anywhere for Christmas.

*That was nice to have your own family. Did you make gifts for each other? Did you buy gifts?*

Well, we didn't have very much for Christmas, to tell you the truth. [chuckles] I got a doll in there—in fact, I had two of them [laughter] that I can remember, and had a doll buggy. There wasn't many things that . . .

*Was there music in the house? Did you sing carols?*

Oh yes. Mom had a phonograph, and used to play carols and things like that.

*Was there any dancing?*

No, no, no. My mother never did dance. My dad used to like to dance, but she never did.

*Did he? And she didn't?*

No.

*Were there any musical instruments in the house?*

No. Well, yes, she had a piano, but she couldn't play it. I don't know, a teacher tried to teach me piano lessons, but they didn't take. And then my sister, she had to take piano lessons. She also took violin lessons, but they didn't take very good either. [laughter]

*But you had fun, you enjoyed it?*

Oh yes.

*That sounds very good. What about Fourth of July celebrations? I understand that was always a big deal.*

Oh, they always had a big celebration right here at Stillwater.

*What'd they do? Describe it.*

Well, we always had a big barbecue and had horse races. Every Fourth of July they had a lot of horse races here at Stillwater.

*Describe—where did the horses race? Did they have a track?*

No, they run on the road up there. Of course they were all dirt roads. They used to run a quarter of a mile, which was right from Stillwater up a quarter, which is where the road turns to go down to Freeman Lane. That was a quarter of a mile, and that's where they used to run the races. People used to

come from all over the valley down here for the Fourth of July. This was a *big* celebration here on the Fourth.

*Did they have a parade?*

No, no parade.

*Did they have fireworks?*

Yes, they had fireworks.

*Where did the fireworks come from? Were they homemade?*

I couldn't tell you, I don't remember. No, I think we bought them, because I can remember [we] used to buy these packages, these little firecrackers. They'd come in a package about, oh, maybe two inches high and a couple inches wide, and they was all little bitty firecrackers.

*How did you set them off?*

With matches.

*Oh! Did anyone get hurt or burned?*

I don't remember. But those you could hold one in your hand and I don't think it'd hurt you. [laughter] But I can remember that. They always had a big barbecue and a picnic, you know.

*About how many would be there?*

Oh gosh, I haven't any idea. I imagine probably three or four hundred people, probably.

*Wow! So instead of in Fallon, they'd come here?*

Oh yes. Nina says she can remember coming down here.

*Oh, I'll have to ask her. That sounds like a lot of fun.*

See, they had that barbecue and picnic right there where I told you earlier where that big grove of trees was, where they used to drive the wagons into it.

*I see.*

I have pictures of what the street looked like in those days.

*Oh good, I want to look at it and see about copying it.*

I recall one Fourth of July, I wasn't very big, but they had a horse race and this horse that Dad had, they raced from the west side, coming back towards Stillwater, and there was a lot of cars parked right where you turned to go into the ranch there. And those times, cars were all open cars, you know. And there were a couple of Indian women sitting there in one old car. And this horse, he come down there, and he made the turn and he jumped clear over the top of the two Indians setting in the car [laughs], and headed right straight for the barn. He was in a hurry to get home.

*Oh my! Did you have your own horse?*

Oh yes.

*Tell me about your own horse. When did you get your own horse?*

Oh, I had several of them. The earliest horse that I [remember], we called him

Roanie—he was a roan-colored horse. And then I had him for quite a while. And then I had a horse that Dad had used here on the ranch. He let me have him. His name was Tommy, and I rode him probably, oh, last four years I was in grammar school, and probably a big part of the time I was in high school.

*Really? You took him with you?*

No, when I was here at the ranch.

*I see. So did you always have a horse?*

Oh yes, always had a horse.

*Now going back to the irrigation project, you said they started to dig more ditches after the project came in. Did you have more ditches? Or were ditches built around for the project?*

Well, they were built around through the project, but I don't recall too much about that.

*Or the ditch riders?*

Yes, I remember the first ditch rider we had. [laughs] He used to ride the ditch, he had a buggy—one horse and a buggy. He'd come down here to the ranch every day to check the water for us and the Freeman Ranch, see how much water we had. He was in a buggy, but I don't remember them building the ditches.

*But as you were getting up in your high teen years, after the project was finished, can you remember that there were less water problems once the project was completed, in the years when you couldn't get it before? Did it change here?*

I don't recall.



*Nothing changed on the ranch when that started?*

No.

*Didn't make it any better?*

Well, it made it better for a while, and then we had that drought in 1932 and 1933, and we didn't have *any* water, practically, for two years.

*In other words, that even affected the water you had before the project, it was so bad?*

Oh yes, because see, the water we had *before* the project all went into the Lahontan Dam.

*Ah, diverted it?*

Yes, diverted it. See, it was the Carson River. And see, when they built Lahontan Dam, well, we lost all that water.

*Oh, so you weren't so happy about it here.*

Well, and they didn't really make that much difference to us.

*I see, it didn't help so much here.*

No. The only thing that helped us, we had water to last longer in the fall, because when we depended only on the Carson River, the middle of July, first of August, we'd be out of water. And of course that was one reason most of us went for—my parents went for—the reservoir, is because that way we'd have storage water that we could irrigate on into August and September and October.

*Now you said they went "into the reservoir." What does that mean?*

Well, they wouldn't have went along with building the reservoir, I don't think, if they hadn't been able to get water later in the year.

*In other words, they voted for it, or they supported it?*

Supported it, yes.

*OK, I get it.*

And being as we had these vested water rights, we didn't have to pay for anything—the construction of the dam or anything.

*OK, so they gave you some benefits in return?*

Yes.

*Now, because you could get more water in the fall, did it change the way your ranching was?*

Oh yes, definitely.

*Describe slowly how that was changed. You mentioned sugar beets.*

Well, yes, they built the sugar beet factory, we rose sugar beets, and then started growing alfalfa hay, which we couldn't before, because we were dependent on the water. And they started growing a lot of cantaloupe. My father grew cantaloupe down here at the ranch. And also, we had forty acres leased to some Japanese people from Colorado that were growing cantaloupe for the seed. They wanted the seed.

*Let's stay with the cantaloupes a little bit, because that's such a unique part of Churchill County, the Hearts-O-Gold. I want you to start at the very beginning, if you can recall, and tell us about the cantaloupes coming here,*

*and your father was leasing land to a Japanese family.*

Well, my dad raised a few cantaloupe. He had, I don't remember how many acres, fifteen, twenty acres. And then getting enough help with the cantaloupe was a problem, with all the rest of the farmwork we had. Two Japanese people—I don't recall their names—were from Denver, Colorado. They came in and leased forty acres of ground from Dad to grow cantaloupe. They wanted the seed to take back into Colorado—that was the Hearts-O-Gold seed. They had big flats up there that they took the seed and dried it. The cantaloupe themselves, they threw them all onto a wagon and Dad hauled them down to feed the pigs with.

*Oh! They didn't even want to eat them? Or sell them?*

No. Well, the ones that were split, you know, you take the seed out. So that's all it was raised for. They raised them for the seed and we got the cantaloupe, and we fed the pigs with the cantaloupe.

*Did you ever learn how they heard about that here?*

No, I don't.

*Probably was publicized in some agricultural bulletin?*

I imagine, yes.

*So how long did your dad raise them on this ranch, and then what did you do with them?*

Well, he only raised them for a year or two, because getting them hauled into Fallon

and everything, it just was too much of a job, because it took too long a time to get them into Fallon.

*Oh, that's right, in those days it was still . . .*

Yes, it was all dirt roads from here into Fallon.

*Ah, and they would spoil.*

The Japanese, they had that forty acres leased for three or four years, and raised seed. And then I remember one year that Dad put in watermelon and he had about ten acres of watermelon [chuckles], and there was no market for them.

*How come?*

Well, there was just no place to ship them. So at that time he had about six, seven hundred pigs, so he just turned the pigs into them. I can remember going out there before he turned the pigs in, taking a big knife, and you split them and eat the heart out of one, and if it didn't taste good, split another and eat the heart.

*So they weren't too sweet, not too good?*

Yes, the ones that didn't taste good, we just didn't . . .

*Did they sell any watermelon in the store?*

No.

*What about cantaloupe? Did they sell cantaloupe in Kent's Store?*

In Fallon? Oh yes, sure. Most of them were shipped, those cantaloupe that were

brought in there were all shipped out. There was people up on Swingle Bench, called the Swingles, and they shipped carloads of cantaloupe clear to Chicago and New York.

*Oh my gosh! Now, did Kent do what they did with the turkeys, buy from the people and then ship it?*

That's right.

*So people here didn't have to worry about shipping.*

That's right.

*How long did that go on?*

Probably when they quit was about the end of World War II.

*And now let's talk about the sugar beets a little bit.*

Well, the sugar beet factory opened the first time, and they just couldn't get enough sugar beets raised to run the factory long enough. They also had a lot of blight in the beets, and it didn't prove very successful. I think they run it two years, if I remember. And then they closed it down, and it sat there for several years, and my grandfather and Bob Douglass and E.S. Berney—I don't remember if there was anybody else—they bought the factory and got a lot of people to plant beets again. They even got beets planted over around Susanville, trying to get enough beets to run the factory. Well, they run it for two years, and it just wouldn't pay off. They couldn't get enough beets.

*Oh, to make it worthwhile.*

Yes, they could only run the factory, as I remember, about thirty days, and they figured they had to have enough beets to run it for two or three months, and it just never would work, so they closed it down. Later, they sold all the machinery out of the factory and tore it down.

*I understand also that raising sugar beets takes a lot of hand labor.*

It does, yes. Yes, I remember when we had sugar beets the second time, Dad had about fifty Mexicans here, working in the beets. We had about three hundred acres of sugar beets here.

*Now when was that, about?*

I don't remember, I was in high school.

*Do you know where they got the Mexican workers?*

It was contract labor. In other words, you contracted with somebody that furnished the Mexicans.

*And that didn't work out?*

Yes, I was in high school. I was probably about sixteen years old.

*So then you started to raise the alfalfa hay with the irrigation, right?*

Right.

*So were new ditches built to take care of these new products?*

Yes.

*But you don't remember that?*

I don't remember when they built all the canals, no. They probably built all the canals when they was building the dam, I would imagine.

*With the project then, and you were getting water now through that, except for those drought years, was there a pretty steady supply of the water?*

Yes, there has been up until the last few years. The last few years—well, we've been in drought for the last six, seven years now. Well, we were in a drought for seven years, and last year we had a good year, and then this year we're back into it again. The Bureau of Reclamation is all over us for not complying with their regulations. Oh, they're making it so difficult it's just practically impossible to farm any more.

*We'll get into all of that in depth as a separate thing, because I'm sure there's a big story there.*

Oh yes, a lot of it.

*We won't mix that up with this early period. Now, when you were getting the water, I understand they charged for the water, or were you rationed water, or was it according to how many acres? How did that work?*

They had what they called bottomlands and benchlands. The bottomlands, they figured that 3½ acre feet—that's like down here, bottomlands—3½ acre feet of water for the year, for the season. And benchlands would have been like up in the sandier soils—they got 4½ acre feet of water.

*What happened if you used more?*

They wouldn't let you use more. Well, in the early days, they didn't restrict you. In the

early days of the project, they let people have practically all the water they wanted. But in the later years here, they held them down to what their entitlement is.

*Is that because you have to call and they turn it on? They control?*

Right.

*Are you rationed according to how much land you have?*

Oh yes, so many acre feet of water per acre.

*And then you pay more?*

Well, you pay for every acre foot of water you get.

*So through that period, what about trees? Did your father plant orchards and trees to give shade on the ranch?*

Well, he had two orchards. I can't remember him planting trees, because the cottonwoods were all down through here. But we had two orchards.

*What kind of fruit?*

Mostly apple.

*What did you do with the apples?*

Oh, they used to can them and dried them.

*Make apple pies?*

Yes, make apple pies and applesauce. They had a garden, and the corn, they used to cut it off the cob and dry it for use in the wintertime.

*They grew corn?*

Oh yes.

*Did you grow corn also to feed the hogs and feed the animals?*

No, we didn't then—just eating corn. And they always had a berry patch, raspberries and gooseberries.

*Oh, that sounds good!*

I used to help pick them. I used to hate to pick them gooseberries, because they're always sticky. [laughs]

*Oh, and the prickly things?*

Yes.

*Oh my. So now, let's take you into high school. When did you move into Fallon to go to school?*

First year, when I was a freshman, there were people up here by the name of Garth Patterson that lived just about a quarter of a mile from where we lived. We sold them that place that they had. We sold it to Mrs. Patterson, and Garth was one of the sons, and he was a senior in high school when I was a freshman. And he was driving back and forth to school. So Dad arranged with him to take me in to school. So my freshman year I rode back and forth with Garth Patterson to school.

*How long did it take?*

Oh, it took pretty near an hour to go in and an hour to come back. But then the second year, he had graduated from high school, so Mom and Dad rented a house in Fallon and Mom and my sister and I stayed

in Fallon, there in school, and Ethel went to grammar school in Fallon, and I went to high school. And then on weekends, we'd come home.

*When you first started high school, riding with your friend, and going into Fallon to school, how did it feel? How many kids were in the class? It was a pretty big school, compared to here, wasn't it?*

Oh yes. Yes, it was pretty good-sized. Well, you're kind of lost—particularly the first year, or the first few months. But then there was lots of other—well, they were practically all ranch kids that was going to school. There was no buses in those days here.

*No buses yet?*

Oh no, everybody had to find their own way to get to school. After you become acquainted with people, you made friends, and it was just the same as any other school.

*OK, the first year you were driving with your friend, so you were coming back home. But could you and your friend stay to participate in any school activities and drive home a little later?*

Yes, he was playing football, and I used to go out and watch him.

*Did you get into sports?*

Yes, I was in track, but that was in the spring of the year. And so *he* was in track too. He was throwing the discus and shot put, so I went out for track.

*So in the football, you would just watch? You didn't mind that?*

Oh no.

*And were there changes in Fallon you could observe when you were first commuting that one year?*

Oh, I wouldn't say a great deal, no.

*Now then you go and you move in. Where did you move and what was the house like? It was rented?*

Yes, it was a rented house.

*Did furniture come with it?*

Yes, it did. The house belonged to a barber there in Fallon. He and his wife owned the house they lived in and the house next to it. We just rented it for the school year.

*How did you feel about that? Did you miss the ranch?*

Oh yes, at first. Of course I had cousins there in Fallon.

*And friends by then, your second year.*

Yes, and friends too. And then the second year, my junior year when we moved in, it was in a different house.

*You moved?*

Back into Fallon the second year.

*I see, went home for the summer, and then . . . .*

Yes, but we kept the same house rented for the next three years.

*How did your dad feel about you all being away? He was too busy to wonder?*

Well, I don't know, he never said too much.

*And he had a cook there, so he wasn't missing anything.*

Yes. But we came home every weekend. Mom had a car, and we'd drive.

*She drove?*

Yes. We'd drive home on Friday after school.

*And go back Sunday night?*

Sunday night, yes.

*Were there more amenities in the house in Fallon? Was your house kept pretty up-to-date on the ranch?*

Oh yes, it was kept up. And the second house that we had, Mom had her own furniture in there. There were two bedrooms, and Mom and Ethel was in one bedroom and I was in the other.

*Did you have electricity by then?*

Oh yes, sure. In fact, we got electricity down here at the ranch, it was probably about 1922, 1923, along in there, when we got electricity down here.

*And wasn't it earlier in Fallon, because of the Lahontan Dam generation plant?*

Yes, they was generating electricity.



*So they got it earlier.*

Yes.

*And you had inside plumbing and everything?*

Yes.

*What did the kids do for fun? What did a teenage boy do for fun in high school?*

Well, there wasn't a great deal to do at that time. I went out for football the second year. Of course I never made the team, I was always too little. But I went out for it every year, though. And I was on track team every year. I used to like to go to dances and they used to have quite a few high school dances in those days.

*And you learned to dance and liked it?*

Oh, yes, certainly. And they were very, very strict. When you danced with a girl, you didn't get close to her, you held her away. And if you got too close, you got called, too! In fact, you couldn't walk down the hall in high school and take hold of a girl's arm or anything. You'd get kicked out of school for three days!

*We need to bring him around again. [laughs]*

I'll say, we had a really tough principal. Oh, he was really rough.

*How were you doing in your subjects?*

I did pretty good. I probably averaged about a "B" grade.

*What subjects did you like the best and what did you like the least?*

I liked English the least [laughs], and I liked mathematics the best.

*Did you take after your mother?*

I guess so.

*She was good in math.*

In fact, after I went on to college, mathematics was always easy for me.

*Oh, so that you inherited that part from her.*

I suppose. It has been easy for me. And I took two years of Spanish. I liked Spanish.

*Oh, you liked the language?*

Well, we had the Mexicans here at the time with the sugar beets.

*Oh, so you were the one to communicate with them?*

Well, we had the guy that was over them all—he spoke English, he was the only one. But I used to like to go down there to the bunk house where they all were, and try to talk to them.

*Oh, great!*

And our Spanish teacher was Spanish, and I learned a lot from her. She was really patient with me. She was probably one of my favorite teachers of all the teachers I had in high school.

*Oh, how nice. Did the population change while you were in high school, or was it staying pretty much the same?*

You mean here at Stillwater?

*No, at Fallon, in high school.*

Oh, it was growing. Our class, when we graduated in 1928, there was forty-eight students. It had grown, oh, quite a bit in the four-year period.

*So for three years you spent the school terms living in Fallon.*

Right.

*What else can you tell me during those years to add to the knowledge of what it was like in Fallon and any effects from the year-long water when it wasn't a drought?*

Well, the three years that I went to school up there, my grandfather insisted that I come to work at the store.

*Oh, OK, I want to hear about that.*

After school, we'd get out at 3:20, and I'd be down at the store at 3:30. I worked in the hardware from 3:30 until 6:00. He closed at 6:00.

*Oh my, so grandfather was a disciplinarian.*

Yes. And some Saturdays that they were pretty busy, he'd ask me to stay in town and I'd work on a Saturday.

*So now I want to hear about that in detail. By then you were how old?*

Fifteen.

*First I want you to describe the inside of the store. Tell me what was in that store beside the hardware.*

Well, on the south side of the store was one department. It was all groceries, and you could charge your groceries in there. In fact, everybody charged their groceries, and they delivered them at that time.

*How many worked in the store?*

On that side there was probably six or seven men.

*Wow! All men?*

And women. They had a candy counter—just one girl worked there, and it was probably, oh, forty feet long, all kinds of different candies.

*Really! Were you allowed to take any?*

All you wanted to eat, but you didn't eat very much—you got all you wanted! [laughter]

*I didn't know that—so they had all this candy.*

Yes. And then in the back part of that, they had a meat department where they sold meat. And then they had a cashier's desk between it and the hardware. And they had overhead [pneumatic tubes] to send the money.

*Oh, where it looks like pipes. Is that right? That big a store?*

Yes. Then in the center was the hardware. And then on the north side was what they called the "cash and carry." They didn't charge anything at all—everything was cash and carry.

*Oh, they just set the place where you could just pay and take it.*

In other words, you went in there and the prices were probably five percent cheaper.

*Oh, how interesting! I'd never heard that.*

Then on the other side, where they let people charge. And then in addition to the store, across the street they had a big warehouse where they had all kind of farm machinery and things like that.

*Oh my gosh, they sold that too?*

Yes. And then down on the northern part of town, they had the lumber yard and a feed yard where they sold mixed chicken feeds and seed.

*Now how far from the store was that area?*

It would be four blocks. It was right on the railroad track.

*So how many people worked for your grandfather?*

Oh, there was about a hundred and twenty.

*Wow, that was a big operation for those days.*

And they had an alfalfa mill where they ground alfalfa meal. In fact, they had *two* of them at one time there.

*Oh my. And you took care of hardware?*

Well, I just worked in there during my high school years.

*Working at the counter?*

Yes.

*And so he taught you?*

Yes. Later years, I ran the lumber yard after I got out of college. In fact, I was their head bookkeeper there for number of years too.

*We'll get to that whole story. Now, back to the store when you were in high school. Did you observe the kind of people who came in and what they were using the hardware for?*

Most of them were farmers. There wasn't too many people living in Fallon at that time. I don't know how many there was, seven, eight hundred people probably is all. It was mostly farmers, because, see, there was all these 40 and 80 acres, maybe some 160 acre places—very few big places. There was only four or five big places in the valley, and there's still only four or five big places. But they'd come in, all kinds of hardware they'd want, you know. You learn quite a bit about the hardware part of it, and you also learn quite a little bit about the machinery. We sold some machinery parts right there at the hardware store.

*Did your grandfather pay you?*

Yes, I got twenty-five cents an hour.  
[laughter]

*Were you allowed to save that, in your own account?*

Oh yes.

*I mean, you didn't have to turn it over to your folks?*

Oh no.

*You could have that, so that gave you an incentive.*

Yes. On Saturdays I worked ten hours, and I got two-and-a-half [\$2.50]. There was a lot of money in those times!

*Did you resent it, or did you just accept it? Did you like it? How did you feel about it?*

You mean working in the store?

Yes.

I liked it.

*It suited you?*

In fact, I remember in the summertime I never worked in there—I always worked here at the ranch. In fact, I stayed mostly out in the mountains with the cattle and the sheep.

*Oh, in the summers when you were out of school?*

Yes.

*So you were busy.*

I remember one summer, one of the hardware clerks was going on a vacation, and another one got hurt, and they only had one clerk left there—they had three clerks normally. And I was out at the mountains, and Dad sent somebody out to get me, because they only had one clerk in there, and it was so busy.

*Oh, and they needed you!*

So I came in and helped them for about two weeks, stayed with my grandpa and grandma until the help got back.

*Is this still while you were in high school—fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen?*

Yes.

*More kids today should do that, right?*

Yes.

*You said you spent summers. Is that the first time you spent whole summers at the camps? Before you used to supply the camps.*

Yes, well, that was later. That was after I was out of high school.

*OK, so tell me about the summers in high school, going to these . . .*

Well, I used to go out there . . .

*Where's "there"?*

Well, it's out here in these mountains.

*How far from this ranch?*

It's eighteen miles. And we went horseback out.

*Now who's "we"?*

The buckaroo and myself.

*Oh, that's when you went with a buckaroo.*

Yes, his name was Dave Sanford. Dad would send me out there with him, and we'd take pack horses and take some barley for the horses and groceries to eat.

*And what was out there? What were you going to do?*

Just a cabin. Well, we packed salt around for the cattle.

*So this was still range land before the military took it over.*

Yes, right. And [we] moved cattle around, and one thing and another, like that.

*Where did you sleep?*

We slept there in the cabin.

*Did you like that?*

Oh, it didn't bother me until one episode we had. Dave and I always slept together, we had a bunk bed there.

*Did you like him? Did you both get along?*

Oh yes, real good.

*How old was he?*

Oh, he was probably fifty-five, sixty years old.

*Oh, he could be almost your grandpa!*

Yes. And he would lower the boom on me if I got to playing around too much. But I remember one night—we had a dirt floor in the cabin, and we'd go to bed at night—I always slept next to the wall, and he slept on the outside. And we'd climb into bed—you never throw the covers back, just climb in. And this night I went to go to bed, and for some reason, I never knew why, I threw the covers back, and there was a rattlesnake in the bed.

*Oh my gosh!*

I hollered! [laughter] Dave picked up something—I don't remember what it

was—to hit the rattlesnake, and he crawled down between the bed and the wall, and he had a hole, a gopher hole down there, and he crawled down the hole. So we stayed up all night, boiling water and pouring down that hole. [laughter] Boy, after that, we sure was awful careful. But of course there's quite a lot of rattlesnakes out there. In fact, pretty near every day or two, we'd kill a rattlesnake.

*Is that right? Was anyone ever bit by one?*

No. I had one or two strike at me—in fact, I had one strike at me one day, and struck right between my legs. It was pretty scary. Another time when I was out there in the summer, I was riding along ahead of Dave and it was real early in the morning, and there was a big rock there, and the horses always stepped over that rock—it was in the trail. And the horse started to step over that, and there was a rattlesnake on it, and he made a big jump and threw me off. I'd heard the rattlesnake rattle, and boy, I was really crawling, trying to get out of the way.

*Oh my! You also went to sheep camp, you said, in the summer. Or is this the same, sheep or cow?*

Yes, sheep or cow.

*And you'd go how many summers?*

I did it for three summers.

*For three summers, until you were out of high school?*

Yes.

*You mentioned to me something about wild horses or mustangs. Tell me about that.*

We probably had, I would estimate between 1,000-1,200 wild horses on our ranch. In 1928, they were so thick that they were eating up all the feed. We had to bring the cows home early, and we brought them home about the first of July, because the grass was gone. So Dad said, "Well, we can't put up with this any longer." At that time you went to the sheriff, and you put up a bond that if you killed somebody's horse, you'd pay for their horse if you shot somebody else's horse. So Dad bought me a brand new rifle, a 250-3000, and a case of shells.

*How old were you now?*

I was seventeen years old. And he said, "You and Dave go out there"—Dave was a buckaroo—"I want you to kill as many of them horses as you can." In thirty days we shot six hundred horses. In later years, we kept after them.

*What did you do with them? What happened to them?*

Well, at first, we were going to skin them. [laughs] A hide was worth about three dollars. So that didn't pay, because it took us too long to skin them, and on a steep hillside, you get them half skinned, and they'd roll away from you. So then we started to taking the manes and the tails, roaching them for the hair. The hair on the mane would bring \$1.75 a pound, and the tail hair was \$1.25 a pound, which would bring about \$3.00 for the hair off of a horse. Actually, we made good money, because we were shooting twenty to twenty-five horses a day.

*Oh my. Who bought these? Where did you sell them?*

There was a guy by the name of Jim Law that had a store there in Fallon. He used to buy

all that horse hair from us. Of course the horse hair in those days was used in men's lapels, on their suits, and in the seats of cars—it was all horse hair, in with the springs. So that was your market for the hair. We just had to eliminate those horses.

*Well, how did you do that?*

By shooting them all.

*I know, but how did you get rid of the carcasses?*

Oh, we just left them.

*And then predators would come?*

Yes, predators ate them. And all the horses we shot, we shot in a two-year period there, about nine hundred horses, and there was only one branded horse that we ever shot. And the man that the horse belonged to lived down in Dixie Valley. So Dad told him that I'd shot his horse, and he said, "Oh, I lost that horse about five, six years ago. He got with a bunch of mustangs. He was no good anyway. You don't need to pay me for him." [laughter]

*So you only had to pay if they were branded?*

Yes. Otherwise, they was just wild horses. And that was the reason he took out that bond, with the county.

*He was being honest.*

In case you killed somebody's horses, then you was under a bond to pay for them.

*Was this a whole summer that it took to do this?*

Thirty days.



*Oh my gosh!*

You have no idea. The day that we rode into camp, started shooting those wild horses, sitting right at the cabin door, we counted over three hundred horses in one canyon. There was just horses *everywhere*. People just don't realize what it was. In fact, they just beat the country out. In fact, it took quite a few years for the country to come back, because those horses had beat it out so bad, being in there twelve months of the year.

*Yes, they were really wild.*

Oh yes, and then they'd eat the feed down bad, and then they'd start pawing it, and even pawed it out by the roots.

*Oh my! So you did a favor for a whole bunch of people.*

Well, we figured we did. Of course a lot of people nowadays would say, "No, no." But they don't know what the conditions were.

*That's right. I mean, when you don't know, you just look at a horse and think it's a horse.*

And we protected the range, too, by doing so. If we hadn't have done it, they would have probably eaten up all the brush, they were so thick. People just don't realize how . . . .

*Is that the only time you had to do that? Did that clean out the bulk of them?*

Yes, and we got them down to numbers where . . . . We like a few horses, you know, because they keep trails open, and you like to see them. But when you get numbers like that . . . .

*Yes, it's like other animals that they have to take to an island or do something.*

Yes. In fact, there was no deer in that country at all. The horses were so thick that they ate up all the feed and there was no deer. I was sixteen years old before I ever saw a deer in the Stillwater Mountains.

*Is that right?*

Yes, and today we've got probably 400-500 deer out there, and we also have antelope. But the horses were so thick that they had just taken all the vegetation.

*Well, what I want to do now, Mr. Kent, is to just review what we're going to do in the second interview, because we're going to have another session in June. I want to look at photographs and take some photographs of you around your ranch. We'll be covering next time, many things, including more details on your very active life in the hunting and fishing. You've won a lot of awards, you've been very active in many things that we're going to cover. I will also ask you about this wildlife viewing area, and CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. So what we're going to do today, I want to thank you for this first session—but it's just a first session. You have so much to tell us from your varied lifetime here. It's been a great pleasure. So we'll end it now, and we'll leave the tape just where it is for June, and we're going to shut it off and set a date.*

Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Churchill County Oral History Project. The date is now June 6, 1994, and this is the second session of an interview with Ira Hamlin Kent.

*Sylvia Arden: Good morning, Hammy—I think I can call you Hammy now. I'm glad to be back for a second session with you. I thank you for allowing me to come again. I want to start this second session with your years after high school. First of all, tell me about graduation, and then what you did after you left high school.*

Ira Kent: I graduated from high school in 1928. As I recall, there were forty-eight of us graduated from high school that year. During the summer, I enrolled in Armstrong College, located in Berkeley, California. They had a four-year course that you could do this whole thing in three years. In other words, we went by quarters. So I entered in September of 1928, and went straight through for three years, and graduated in 1931. While I was enrolled in the college, I joined the Sphinx fraternity and was president of it for two years while I was in college. I graduated from college with a degree in business management and I had a minor in accounting.

*It showed you had leadership qualities early. A couple of questions: How did you learn about the college? And was anyone else from Fallon or this area, that you knew, there?*

I really didn't want to go to the University of Nevada—for some reason I wanted to go to a business college. Ellen Mills, who worked for the I.H. Kent Company, had graduated from the Armstrong College a couple of years before that, and she recommended it very highly. We wrote quite a few letters to different people who had graduated, and everyone recommended it exceptionally high.

*That sounds like a very wise move. Did you come home summers?*

We just had two weeks vacation at Christmastime, and also between the spring break and the summer break. That was the only vacation we had for the whole year.

*Did you live on campus?*

No, I lived in a fraternity house.

*How did it feel for a young man from kind of a rural area, going to a college and living in a fraternity house? How did you take to that? How was it at first?*

Well, at first I was kind of lonesome [chuckles] it being the first time I'd really been away from home, outside of going out to the mountains a lot. I seemed to adapt to it real quick, because there were a lot of my other fraternity brothers that were there were from rural California, and we had a lot of things in common. There was also a boy there from Yerington, so there was a lot of things in common that we had, which made it a lot easier.

*Did you make friends that stayed friends with you?*

Yes. I had fraternity friends . . . . In fact, one of them was here to see us only about two years ago. He's about my age, and he lives down at Live Oaks, which is down by Marysville. Then there were others that we used to visit with, up until we all started getting older and we've kind of lost track of one another, or we've all passed away—I don't know which.

*Now, when you went to take this business course, did you have in mind the Kent Store?*

No, not necessarily. I felt that anyone that's going to be in any kind of business,

even in the ranching business, should have a good knowledge of business administration, and it certainly has helped me through the years—particularly the accounting part of it.

*It sounds like you were a very practical young man at a very young age.*

Well, [chuckles] I probably was. I don't know. You did those things a lot on impulse. When I was going to high school, I thought I wanted to be an engineer. By the time I got out of high school, I'd lost all sense of trying to become an engineer. It just didn't interest me that much.

*When you were finishing your college, then what did you do?*

When I finished college, I wanted to go to work for a while in some kind of a business to further my experience. So I first went to the Fallon Bank and applied for a job. As I recall, I think they were paying sixty dollars a month for tellers at that time. My grandfather, who was the main owner of the I.H. Kent Company told me I'd better come and work for him. So I went to work for them, as I recall, the first of April.

*What year?*

In 1931, and as a bookkeeper. I worked there for the I.H. Kent Company up through 1942.

*That was through the Depression, part of that time?*

Yes. In 1932, all the banks in Nevada went broke, except one bank, the First National in Reno. I think there was another bank out in Ely that didn't go broke. But it was really a catastrophe to the whole valley here. There was no banking facilities, and so the I.H.

Kent Company more or less took on the job of banking facilities for the valley here. The only money that the farmers were receiving was money from their cream checks. The creamery here was still in operation here at Fallon, and the sale of eggs and produce to the I.H. Kent Company, and their alfalfa hay and grain was all purchased by the Kent Company. We cashed all the checks for the people. Some of them would have some checks or money coming from other sources, and we acted more or less as the bankers until such time as the First National Bank put an office in Fallon.

*Were you the one in charge? As an accountant, were you the one handling all that?*

Yes, I was in charge.

*So you had a major role there.*

I certainly did.

*Let's start when you first started with them. That was in 1931?*

Right.

*Tell me the scope of the store at that time.*

Well, we had the alfalfa mill, which was located down on the railroad tracks. We had a portable mill, and then also a mill there that was a stationary mill.

*What does it mean by "portable mill"?*

Well, it could be moved. In other words, we could move it out into the country. It had originally been down here at Stillwater, but it had been taken back into Fallon and set up again.

*In other words, if ranchers wanted to cut their hay and bring it to you, they could use your mill?*

We bought all the alfalfa hay from the ranchers.

*I see, before anything was done with it.*

Yes, it was all cut and put into a stack. All the hay was stacked loose in those days. We purchased the hay from out of the stack. We had someone haul it by hay wagons and teams to the alfalfa mill, where we ground it, and the hay was then sold . . . Well, back up a little bit. When it was ground, we sacked it in hundred-pound sacks. It was loaded in railroad cars and shipped to different places: California, Texas, and some was even shipped to England, Sweden, and Norway. [Those] are some of the places I recall it was being shipped. We shipped normally one car every day, a fifty-ton car. So we were moving a lot of hay out of here at that time, when you consider that it was all hauled in there by teams and hay wagons.

*Now, let me ask you this: Let's go back a little bit, because this is kind of an amazing story, because people think of the Kent Store just as a store where you can buy a few things. It was much more than that. Who was the person or persons who made all of these contacts of where to sell the hay, especially abroad? Who did this?*

Primarily, my uncle did—Ira L. Kent. He made contacts with people in San Francisco. And from there, we built up a trade and our name became known around the country as producers of high-quality alfalfa meal, which was used in chicken and turkey feeds, cattle feeds, and et cetera.

*Did you also advertise in newspapers or farmers' magazines?*

Not that I can remember.

*Is there anywhere evidence in paper of some of the correspondence, some of the business papers or things to show this? This is such wonderful archival, historical material, for such an unusual business out of early Fallon. Where would that be?*

Well, it possibly could be in some of the old papers of the *Fallon Eagle* or the *Fallon Standard*. There would probably be stories about us shipping this alfalfa meal overseas.

*Yes, but I don't mean just the newspaper. Were there business records, shipping records?*

I don't know if there's any left or not. You might contact Robert Kent, who had all the papers that were left there at the I.H. Kent Company. He may still have some of the information on them, but I would have my doubts that there's any of it left.

*I guess when you're doing something, you don't know it's going to be historically important.*

No, that's right.

*How many people were working for the Kent Company in those early years of the thirties when you were there?*

Well, in addition to the alfalfa mill, we had the lumber yard and a feed mill where we sold feed for chickens, turkeys, and calf feeds, and et cetera. Also, we carried cement and seeds of all kinds. In addition to that, we had the grocery store where we had a cash and carry on the grocery side, which

I think I mentioned previously, and the charge account. Then we also had a hardware within the same building. And then we had the equipment dealership for John Deere equipment. We also had a shop over in what used to be the Wallace Building, where we did some repair work on cars and trucks.

*So tell me how many people, in different divisions, were working? You probably employed most of the people in Fallon.*

Well, at that time we were probably employing a hundred and fifty people, yes.

*You were really important to the economy of Fallon!*

That's right.

*What was the population here, of the town, about, in 1931?*

I would imagine it was probably about 1,000-1,200 people. I couldn't say for sure.

*Did people come from all over to buy from you, from all over parts of Nevada that didn't have a place like that?*

Oh yes, we did a lot of business down in Hawthorne, and on down into Mina. We shipped food and building materials clear down into Tonopah, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Austin, Eureka. And at that time we were shipping a lot of cantaloupe—a lot of cantaloupe were raised here in the valley, and we were shipping them all around the state. And in the fall, Thanksgiving and Christmas, we handled probably 50 percent of the turkeys that were grown here, and they were shipped to San Francisco and also around to different towns within the state of Nevada.

*I read in some things I was reading about the early days of the store, where they had pumpkin pies and coffee that they were serving?*

Oh yes, we did that.

*Was that while you were there?*

Yes, that was during Thanksgiving time.

*Tell me about that.*

Well, it was just kind of a, I suppose you'd call it an advertisement to get people to come in—free pumpkin pie and coffee.

*That sounds good!*

Yes, it brought a lot of people in to do shopping and so forth.

*Was yours the main place where people shopped? Was there much competition then?*

In 1931 I can't remember if Safeway was in Fallon or not. Skaggs was in Fallon, and then there was the Fallon Mercantile Company. As far as the meat part, Fallon Slaughter and Supply Company, which was located right across the street from the Kent Company.

*At that time, were many of the families that had come into this region, families that had come in during that homesteading period, through the mid-twenties, where a lot of the new ranches started and a lot of new people coming in? Before that period?*

Well, I think the Kent Company probably financed pretty near every homesteader that came in here, in one way or another, because we gave an awful lot of credit and we were probably the only operation that could give



credit to the extent that we did, because we could take their alfalfa hay and put it through the mill. We could use their grain and grind it, and we bought their turkeys, we bought their cantaloupe, we bought their eggs. So we could take pretty near anything they could raise. And so consequently we could extend a lot of credit, and these early-timers, I think if it hadn't been for the Kent Company, 90 percent of them would have never made it.

*That's what it sounds like. That's very important. Were there many that couldn't make it, either because of the soil or their own limitations? Do you know of some where maybe they couldn't raise enough of the things that you wanted, or . . .*

I think everybody was getting along pretty good up until the Depression hit us in 1932. When the banks went broke, lots of them had mortgages on their places. California Bank of America had a lot of mortgages on places here in the Fallon area. The Fallon National Bank, which went broke, that was a Wingfield chain of banks. There was a lot of them went broke during 1932, 1933, because they couldn't pay off those loans, and they were foreclosed on.

*I see, so they lost.*

And they lost everything.

*Oh, how sad.*

Yes.

*And then did others come along and buy the property? It was probably pretty cheap then.*

Oh, for the next two or three years, there was not a great deal of farm property moving,

because people just didn't have the money and they were scared of the economy. It was probably in 1935 or along in there, 1935-1936, these properties that had been taken over by various institutions commenced to be moved again. But they were really sold at depressed prices. For example, I purchased two hundred thirty acres with a vested water right on, from the California Lands, for seven hundred dollars, which was practically nothing, but still was a lot of money in those days.

*Still, you had it, and no one else did.*

And some of these places that had . . . Oh, they were real going places purchased for, oh, I'd say eight, ten, twelve thousand dollars, where if it hadn't been for the Depression, they'd been worth three times that amount.

*So did a lot of people leave the area then, the ones who lost?*

Right.

*How did it affect the Kent Store, the Depression years?*

Well, we immediately opened up a bank account in San Francisco with the American Trust Company. We were in real good financial shape at the time, so we weathered the Depression real good. It was tough going for a few years, because we were carrying so many people on the books. But we survived, and I think it was mostly through the alfalfa mill where we could move the products out of the valley—it saved us all.

*Yes, and brought money into the town.*

Yes, brought money into the economy.



*Where were you living during this time period?*

After I graduated from college, I lived with my grandfather and grandmother, up until the time Nina and I were married.

*Where were they living at that time?*

They lived right there in Fallon, just about a block away from the store.

*Is that house still there?*

No, it was sold and moved out. Some people down in Old River District have it.

*I see, in other words, the whole house was moved?*

Yes, the whole house was moved.

*So you lived right close to the store, which made it convenient. I bet you worked long, long hours.*

Yes, we went to work at seven o'clock in the morning and worked till six. That was supposed to be closing hours. Of course, being the bookkeeper, I hardly ever got out before seven, because we had to close the day's work up every night before we left.

*No such thing as a forty-hour week!*

No. [laughter] There was lots of seventy-two hour weeks.

*Oh my. Did you get a lot of satisfaction from your job? Were you satisfied working there?*

Yes. Yes, I was. I really learned a lot, an *awful* lot. My grandfather was quite a businessman, and a sharp businessman—also,

my uncle was. I certainly benefitted from working under the two of them. It was probably the best experience I've ever had in my life.

*Oh my. Now you said you were working under your uncle and your grandfather. I want to know more about your grandfather in that period when you worked with him, because then you would really get to know him, looking at him not just as a grandfather, but as a businessman.*

"I.H." as everyone knew him, was really a shrewd man. He was very, very outspoken. I've heard him stand and cuss somebody up one side and down the other, and then turn around and pat them on the back. He was a very strong politician. He was a Democrat, and I've heard him sit there and pick up the telephone and call Key Pittman on the telephone, who was a Nevada senator, and just give him holy Hell about something, and he wouldn't back up. I mean, what he thought, he said, and he never backed up an inch.

*How old was he at this time when you started working there with him?*

He was about seventy-two, seventy-three years old.

*Youthful, energetic man?*

Oh yes. He was over there every day to the store. Of course his son, Ira L., was also in the office there and took care of the credit and so forth. And I.H.'s son-in-law, M.H. Wallace, was the head of the groceries and hardware, and he was a really sharp businessman and knew merchandise real well.

*Was your grandfather the head of all of this? Was he the one who oversaw?*

Yes, he was, until, oh, the last few years of his life. He would come over and have his two bits to say every day, and then go home. But Ira L., my uncle, took over active management of it probably, oh, I'd say probably around 1936, 1937, he really started taking over the active management of the whole operation.

*And did he fill the shoes of his father?*

Yes, he certainly did. He was very sharp and really knew the business from one end to the other.

*Now where was your dad during this period?*

My father was running the ranch out here at Stillwater.

*OK, he was the rancher. He spent all his time on the ranch?*

He was the rancher, right.

*OK, you said you lived in that house until you met your wife. When did you meet her and when did you marry?*

Well, Nina's brother worked for us there in the Kent Company, and she came into the store to meet her brother to go home. She was working over at J.C. Penney's, and she come into the store to ride home with him. That's when I first really knew Nina. We went together for about two years before we were married, and we were married in October of 1935.

*And where did you make your home after your marriage?*

Just prior before I got married, I bought a house down on Churchill Street in Fallon. As I recall, I think I paid eighteen hundred dollars

for the house, and it was a one-bedroom home. The house is still there, and it was a really well-constructed house, all hardwood floors. The house had no furniture in it, and we had a couple of boxes that we used to put our things in until we could buy some furniture.

*So you weren't making a fortune at the Kent Store. [chuckles]*

No, I was making a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. That was after five years of working there.

*Oh my! [chuckles] Now, how long did you stay at the store?*

I continued working there. In 1939, Leo Pinger, who was the manager of the lumber yard, had a heart attack and passed away, and so Ira, my uncle, asked me if I would go down and run the lumber yard. I, of course, had a little experience with lumber operations through all the accounting work that I had been doing, and so I moved down there and took over the active operation of the lumber yard and the warehouse, which was also located there at the lumber yard.

*Was there a lot of construction going on? Tell me about that business.*

This was just before the war started, and so there was a lot of contracts going on around these different government agencies—particularly down in Hawthorne, there was construction work starting. And a lot of the mines were still going yet, and we were furnishing materials to mines all around the state.

*Did you ship it yourself? Did you have your own trucks?*

Yes, we had our own trucks, and we hauled the lumber directly to the jobs. And then as the war started heating up, there was more and more contracts in Hawthorne.

*What was going on in Hawthorne?*

That was the naval ammunition depot.

*Oh was it? OK. When was that established there?*

I don't know. I think it was established in the twenties—I'm not sure of the date. But the ammunition depot at Hawthorne, you see, was the largest ammunition depot, I think, at that time in the United States.

*Oh, that's new information.*

So there was a lot of construction work going on there. The government had practically froze all building as far as home buildings, because the lumber was needed for defense purposes. So I had a contract with one of the lumber mills in California to use all their surplus lumber. What I mean surplus, there was a box manufacturing business, and what they didn't use for their box manufacturing, I could use for defense purposes. So the end of each month, they would send me an inventory of what lumber that I would have available for sale for defense purposes. And it normally run about four million board feet of lumber a month.

*Now, did they then bring it here?*

No.

*You sold it from their place?*

Yes. Everything, you had to have a . . . oh, a priority, I guess you'd call it. I

can't remember the exact name for it now, before you could even purchase the lumber. In other words, it had to go to defense purposes.

*I see. Did you need a government form for that?*

Yes. And so this four million board feet of lumber that was made available to me, I sold primarily to contractors who were working on the Navy base in Hawthorne. Even sold some lumber down to Las Vegas that went into the Nellis Air Force Base, which was being constructed. Lumber also went out to Gabbs where that big mill was being put in. And even sent some lumber over to Susanville to the construction of the new ammunition depot at Herlong, California. So most of the mines in the state had to be closed down because they could not qualify to get lumber, and so consequently they just had to shut down—outside of the copper mine at McGill and Ely. They continued operation.

*The government needed the copper?*

Needed the copper, right. Otherwise, it was pretty "closed case" as far as the sale of lumber for home construction—it was just out.

*It sounds like you were handling all of this without touching the lumber?*

Yes.

*Was it all through paperwork and contracts?*

Paperwork. Well, we were probably getting anywhere from five to six train carloads of lumber into the lumber yard every day, where we would unload them and put them onto trucks to go on to Hawthorne.

*OK, I see, they would come to Fallon, and then you would direct them to other places.*

Yes. And of course some we shipped direct, right from the mill, like down to Las Vegas. It was shipped by rail directly to Las Vegas.

*So you had to handle many details.*

Oh yes, yes. At that time I had around forty employees right there in the lumber yard. And today, I don't know how many they have, but nothing comparing to that.

*Is it still going on?*

The lumber yard is still in operation.

*Oh, we'll talk about that. The lumber yard, but not the store?*

No, the store has been closed.

*What does exist? The lumber yard. Anything else?*

Just the lumber yard is all.

*Were you always able to get help—especially in the busier days—from this region? Or did you have to look to other places to get some of your help?*

No, we got help. It was all local. A lot of the people were farming and they'd come in and work for a day or two, some of them would. It helped them along and it helped us along. And then there was others that hadn't been drafted yet, and they were still working. We really didn't have any problem as far as labor.

*Now, how long did you stay in the lumber yard?*

I was there until 1942. My dad wanted me to come out here and help him. Well, during those years I had purchased, as I previously stated, two hundred thirty acres of ground, and I had about a hundred and fifty cows of my own. And my father said if I was going to keep those cows, I'd better be starting to take care of them. He didn't have time to take care of them. And so Nina and I moved out to the ranch here. Then about that time my Uncle Ira become quite ill.

*The one that was running the store?*

The one that was running the store. So I was out here part of the time, and in there part of the time, helping him out. Then—I don't remember the exact year—but around 1945, he become quite ill—in 1946, maybe it was—and I was back in there, running the whole operation, until his sons got out of the service.

*How many of his sons were in the service?*

He had three sons, all in the service: Tom, Kenny, and Bob.

*Did they bother you about the service?*

No. Well, being as I was running the lumber yard there that was selling all the lumber to the government, and then with my livestock and everything, no, I was not. I did try to enlist one time, and they told me no. I wanted to try to enlist in the Navy as a procurement officer, but they told me what I was doing was more important.

*They couldn't take everyone away, right.*

No.

*Getting back to the ranch, how long were you and Nina living here? I don't know what you were living in, but you said both of you came back to live at the ranch.*

Yes, we lived up right where you turn in up at the mail box.

*OK, that first house?*

Yes. We lived there until 1948, when we built this house.

*You built this house while you were staying here on the ranch?*

Oh yes. In fact, we lived at the ranch all the time after we moved here in 1942.

*I see, even though you went back to work at the store.*

Right.

*Would you commute every day?*

Yes, I drove in and back every day.

*Were the roads pretty good then?*

Oh yes. This was oil road [gravel road sprayed with oil (Tr.)].

*OK, so you lived here and you were working part-time here. When you came back to live on the ranch, had it changed very much from your early days here?*

Oh yes, things really changed, because during the war years, we just didn't have the men that we had previously had. We moved away from the horse days to the tractor days.

Where it used to take us fifty men to put up our alfalfa hay, we were getting by with thirteen, fourteen men.

*And you were able to gather up enough?*

Yes, mostly . . . Well, I wouldn't say mostly, but probably a third of them were high school boys.

*Oh, working during their summer days off?*

Yes.

*Oh, that's good. So Kent always helped the employment situation in Churchill County.*

Oh yes, we have. Yes, we changed, like I said, on our haying operation, where we used to pitch the hay by hand on the wagons and haul it in. We had a loader that picked up the shocks right out of the field and loaded them right to the wagon, which did away with a lot of the help that we had previously had. In fact, we used to have to run seven or eight hay wagons to the stock, where we cut that down to three by the use of tractors and machinery.

*Where were you selling all that hay? Still the same as before?*

Well, we fed most of our hay.

*How many animals were here then?*

Well, up until the war, we run two bands of sheep.

*How many in a band?*

Seventeen hundred ewes in a band. Then the war came on. We had to sell the sheep

because the Navy base out here at Fallon took over the public lands which we had been running our livestock on, for air-to-ground gunnery. And in addition to the sheep we had been running a couple hundred head of beef cattle. And then we were still in the dairy business, so it was quite a rounded-out enterprise. What hay we did sell, we baled it right here at the ranch and sold it baled, and it was shipped to California.

*Since we're talking about the military coming in, when that base was built, it must have been very mixed emotions here, since they had to take some of the land that you needed. What were the feelings when the base was coming in?*

Well, it was a very controversial issue, because where they put the base took in quite a bit of the agricultural land in the valley. There was quite a lot of mixed feelings about them doing that. There was so much area of ground that wasn't in cultivation that could have been used, instead of the ground that was used.

*Why was this land selected, do you know?*

I couldn't tell you. I think it was probably political.

*Oh, because it did infringe, didn't it? Didn't they have to buy out some places for people to move?*

That's right.

*And it's so close. Does the sound of the planes disturb animals and people?*

Yes, I think putting the base where it was, was more or less political, myself.

*Did you have a vote?*

Oh no! No, no! Politics, under the table.  
[laughs]

*So that was pretty tough on you.*

Well, it didn't affect us so much as it did . . . . It did and it didn't, because . . . . It *did* affect us due to the fact our livestock operation couldn't operate. And not only ours, but others here in western Nevada were also affected the same way, because the Navy took over all that land, federal land to use for air-to-ground gunnery.

*I see that would make a difference, especially since this was meant to be an agricultural region. The whole purpose of the Reclamation project was to keep it that way.*

*Now during that period did you and Nina have any children?*

Yes. Our first son was born in 1939, Gary. And our second son, Bruce, was born in 1945.

*I think I have that. Where were they born? In a hospital in Fallon?*

No, in Reno. St. Mary's Hospital in Reno—both of them were born.

*And she was able to get there in plenty of time?*

Oh yes.

*Was this house built when your first child was born?*

No. See, Gary was born in 1939, and we were still living in Fallon. Bruce was born in



1945, and that was just about the time this house was built.

*That's right, you had to wait for the war to be over to build, because you couldn't get construction materials.*

Well, yes. And it was even real hard, still, to get material, because this Korean deal was cooking at the time, and lumber was real, real hard to come by.

*So now I want to get back . . . . You were spending part-time here and part-time in the store after your uncle [became ill]. First we're going to go back to the store. How was that progressing through the war? What other effects, and how many years did you stay at the store, managing it?*

Oh, I was there probably about a year, as I recall.

*And what year, again, was that? Was that during the war?*

Well, it was right at the end of the war.

*Had it affected the store?*

No, I don't think it affected it at all. In fact, our business had been exceptionally good all during through the war because so many new people had come into Hawthorne—ammunition depot work—and out at Gabbs.

*Were they starting to build the air field here?*

Yes, and the air field was in operation here. The town was growing. Our business was growing with it.

*Were you able to get more help so you had enough help there during that period?*

Yes, we never was troubled with help. Well, there was a lot of older people that were never drafted, because the draft age ended at forty-five.

*Or if you had a certain number of kids.*

So there was a lot of people who were over forty-five who filled in. And we never had any problems as far as labor was concerned. Had more problems on the ranch part of it than we did in the store part, because, well, we just couldn't pay the wages that was being paid by contractors. We couldn't compete, labor-wise.

*What was the feeling here during the war? With so many going in, was there a feeling of concern? Were there changes in the town because of the war going on and so many having to leave?*

Oh definitely, definitely.

*Especially a small town where everyone knows everyone.*

Yes. And so many of them were getting killed. It was really the sad part of the history of the county and the state. Two of the boys that I used to run around with a lot, one of them was Bruce Van Voorhis who graduated from Annapolis—and the Fallon base is named after him, Van Voorhis Field. Of course they now call it the Fallon Air. But he was killed in action, and his brother [Wayne] was captured in the Philippines and they never did hear anything more from him. So there was a lot of that. It was really a sad time in the history of the town.

*Yes, of course the whole country. You stayed about a year at the store, and then when your cousins came back from the military . . . They came back safe?*

Yes, all three of them.

*Did they have to go overseas?*

Oh yes. Bob was in the Marines; and Tommy was in the Navy, and he was on a destroyer; and Ken was in the Air Force and was a gunner on—I don't know whether it was a B-17 or what.

*Did they all come back right after the war?*

Yes, they all came back and Bob and Tom become involved in the store. Just a short time after that, their father passed away. I never did have anything more to do with the store because they took over . . .

*So you came back to stay at the ranch?*

Yes . . . the active management of it. Then my father passed away in 1948, and so I spent all my time here at the ranch from then on.

*Where was your mother? Was she still alive?*

Oh yes.

*She lived here?*

Yes, she lived up where Bruce lives now, up where I was born.

*Did she live there alone?*

Yes, she lived alone.

*Was she a pretty strong woman?*

Yes, very strong. She got along real well by herself, and she lived there by herself. In fact, she was at home up until about two days before she passed away.

*How old was she when she died?*

She was eighty-seven.

*I bet she enjoyed her grandsons?*

Oh yes, very much, very much.

*We're going to start this new tape concentrating on your years now, where you were spending your total time on the ranch. And I want you to start telling me when you came back, some of the things that were happening. And let's talk a little bit about the water, if there were any problems.*

As I recall, I think it was about 1946 when I come back full-time on the ranch. My father was still alive, and I took care of the livestock part of it. I tended sheep camp, and we had two bands of sheep, and we ran a couple hundred head of cows. I took care of all the livestock, and my father took care of the ranching part of it.

*Where was the sheep camp now?*

Well, we run the two bands of sheep in the Stillwater Mountains, and we brought them in here on the ranch only to lamb. We lambed here at the ranch in February in sheds, because that gave us a larger lamb when you wean, because it had a little more age on them.

*Explain that a little better to me. They had a little more what on them?*

A little more weight.

*In other words, you could feed them?*

Well, you see, by having an early lamb, most of the sheep operators could not lamb until the weather got good, because they'd lose the lambs. So most of them didn't lamb until probably the last of March, first of April. Well, in our case, where we had the sheds, we'd bring the ewes, when they get ready to drop their lambs, we'd bring them inside and keep them inside for twenty-four hours, until the lamb gets dried off. Then they could be turned back out. In other words, we could sell these lambs along about the first of August, which was a month or two ahead of the normal run of lambs being sold.

*I see. So where were these sheds?*

These sheds were up at the other place there, right where you come into the ranch here.

*OK, near where your first house where you lived was.*

Yes.

*And when you took them to the sheep camp, did you stay with them?*

Oh no, we had a sheepherder for each band of sheep. Of course they would be moving every day or two, on account of following the feed. According to Nevada law, you had to go to the camp at least once every five days to make sure that the herder was all right. And of course you had to take him groceries, because he packed all his camp on burros. So that was one of my jobs, once every five days to go to each sheep camp, and I'd take a pack horse with groceries and go to each camp and take them groceries. And I normally would stay all night at the camp and come back home the next day.

*I heard people say they would go up to the sheep camps, but I didn't know it was a law. That's the first time I've heard that.*

Yes, within five days, you had to go every five days to make sure that the man was all right and everything.

*So how many sheep camps did you have?*

Two.

*And who were these sheepherders? Was it hard to find them? Who were they?*

Well, both the herders that we had were white men. Most of the herders, a lot of the herders were Basque men, but the herders we had were both white.

*Were they local men?*

Well, one of them was local, and the other one, I don't recall even where he came from. He was with us for a long time—in fact, he was still with us when we had to sell the sheep, when the Navy took over the operation. In fact, *both* herders were still with us.

*So this is before the military took over. What year are we talking about then?*

This would probably have been 1943, 1944, and that was about the time that the Navy base got started out here, and we had to sell the sheep.

*But until you sold it, you were in charge of going to the sheep camps.*

Yes, taking care of the camp tenders.

*And the cattle.*

Yes.

*Now, what was your role after you had to sell the sheep?*

Well, we couldn't run any cattle out, because the Navy had all of our range outside of just a little portion south of here, which we could run about a hundred and fifty head of cows on in the wintertime. Otherwise, we had to run all the cattle inside, within the fields. And so we didn't increase our cow numbers until after the war was over and the Navy gave us back the use of our range. Instead of going back into the sheep business, we went into the cow business. It was just too hard to get sheepherders, and so we decided that the cattle business was the best, and we could take care of them ourselves, and it was easier to get help as far as the cattle were concerned.

*Now, did the cattle stay then within your own ranch? Or were there still some grazing lands you could take them to?*

Well, at the end, like I said, when we got our range back from the Navy, that's when we purchased more cattle and got back into the cow business.

*Tell me about the cow business.*

Well, [laughs] what do you want to know?

*Well, where were you selling them, and how many did you have? And how did you sell them? Were they at auction, or corrals?*

When we first started out we just had what cattle that had been here on the ranch, approximately a hundred and fifty head. When the Navy turned the range back to us, we purchased—I can't remember now—two

hundred and fifty head of heifers, over by Yerington, to build up our cow herd again. Our calf crop was kept, the heifers were kept, so that we could increase our herd. We wanted to get our cow herd up to around seven hundred head of cows, which took several years to do. When we weaned our calves, we fed them hay here on the ranch until they got up to around seven hundred pounds, which we would sell as feeders. Sometimes we fed them on out until they were ready to be butchered, and sold them as fat cattle.

*Now, several questions for people who aren't ranchers and are going to be looking at the interviews: Where and how did you sell your cattle? The auction house wasn't here.*

No, there was no auction yard. Moffitt Supply, Moffitt Meat Company, run a big slaughter house in San Francisco, and they purchased practically all the cattle that was raised here in Churchill County.

*Would they see them, or they had been dealing with you?*

They fed a lot of their cattle. They owned a lot of property around and fed cattle. They would contract feeding. Different ranchers had hay, and they would buy the cattle and take them to that ranch or this ranch.

*Would they physically come, send someone?*

Oh yes, they had a man stationed right here in the county that took care of the operation, right.

*Were they your biggest buyers?*

Yes, they were the biggest buyers. There were other buyers, but we had a couple of

slaughter houses in Reno at the time: Nevada Packing Company, and Humphrey Supply Company, who also purchased cattle and hogs and lambs.

*And were you the one in charge of all that, in charge of the cattle on the ranch?*

After my father died, I was, of course, in charge.

*In charge of the entire ranch?*

Right.

*That's kind of a big responsibility, but you were up to it by then.*

Well, yes, but I had had all the business experience with the Kent Company, which gave me a good background to start with.

*As your little boys were getting a little bigger, did they start real early, like you did, helping around?*

Oh yes, they had their chores to do, chickens to feed when they come home from school. We had one milk cow for milk for the house, and they both learned to milk and took care of the chickens. They had their chores to do.

*Did you hire Indians to help you on the ranch, from the Stillwater Indian Reservation?*

Oh yes, we've always hired Indians to help us. In fact, back at that time, we had more Indians than we did white men working. In fact, I don't think there's *ever* been a time that what we haven't had an Indian or two working for us. In fact, right now, we have *two* working for us.

*Did any of the Indian women come and help Nina with the laundry or the cleaning?*

No, Nina did all of her own housework up until the last few years. The last few years, we have had an Indian woman who comes once a week and helps her with the house work.

*Now let's talk a little about the water. Were there periods when you had problems with getting enough water for your ranch? How did that progress during the years of the ranching?*

Well, yes, we had a bad drought. The early thirties there was a bad drought and we were really short of water. And, oh, in later years we've had a year or two, 1965, 1967—I don't remember the exact years—but there's been years that we've had drought years, but nothing like it has been up until the last seven or eight years have been by far the worst we've ever had. A lot worse than even it was in the thirties.

*Of course that affects the whole project, doesn't it?*

Oh definitely. It definitely affects the whole project.

*Have you ever had a time you couldn't get the water you needed?*

Oh, yes. Well, just a year before last, we were only allocated 28 percent of our irrigation water. And then last year we had 100 percent and this year we're back to 57 percent.

*Oh, my.*

So, it's been really difficult. In farming, it's probably the last few years that have been

the most difficult of any time in my lifetime because you never knew where you were going and you couldn't get crops back into production and it's been very difficult.

*What are some of the changes you've had to make because of the difficulty in getting the water?*

Well, we had to leave more ground out of cultivation than we ever did. In fact, we've had, I guess, up to three hundred acres out of cultivation because we didn't have enough water to go to get it all back in. Alfalfa fields have died out more or less through the drought and we've had to plow them up. And now we just don't have enough water to get them back into production again. So it's been real difficult for the whole valley. It's in the same fix, same condition.

*Since we're on the water issue, I want to stick with it a little bit. So the worst drought is the last seven years. What does the future look like as far as the water problems are concerned because I understand there's a lot of other issues dealing with Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake and . . .*

Of course, the issue as far as the water is concerned is there just seems to be no end to the lawsuits that have been filing against us in one way or another by the Pyramid Lake Indians and then also the Bureau of Reclamation, their stand that they're taking and Senator Reid's settlement bill which really has hurt the whole economy of the valley because I feel that we have been deprived of our water when we're supposed to be getting 3 ½ acre feet of water. Of course, the drought has had an effect on that, too, but the B.O.R. [Bureau of Reclamation] moved in and even

though the water's running down the Truckee River, it's going for endangered species. And the endangered species act has hurt us very badly.

*Is that Pyramid Lake with the fish thing?*

Yes. Yes. Yes.

*Are they winning that?*

Well, they've won practically all of it so far.

*What is the settlement bill?*

Well, the settlement was to give the Pyramid Lake Indians additional water and the cities of Reno and Sparks additional water.

*Because of their growth?*

Yes, the growth. And they keep growing and demanding more water.

*Oh, my.*

But as far as agriculture is concerned in Churchill County, I think it's practically gone, or will be gone.

They're going to buy up a lot of this agricultural ground to acquire the water rights for the wildlife. Before all this came about, there was enough rain water coming from the farms and ranches to maintain the marshes. And with the drought and the settlement that was put into effect, there's practically no water that goes to marshes now. And so now they want to buy up the biggest portion of the agricultural land in the valley to get the water off of them to furnish for the marshes, which is going to make the valley look like it did a hundred years ago practically.



*Now, who is the leader in this? Is it your officials?*

Oh, yes. Definitely.

*Whoever is the governing officials?*

The government, yes.

*You don't have representatives that are fighting for the agricultural part of it?*

No. They're not fighting for us. They're fighting for the Indians and . . .

*How do you vote in the people who can help your cause?*

Well, agriculture is such a minority in Nevada. Today we don't have much to say. We used to have a lot to say.

*I see. In other words, this is through the state legislature?*

No, this is federal. In other words, we have the senators . . . the two senators that are both elected. They're both from Las Vegas.

*These are national issues.*

Yes. Yes. Yes. They're both from Las Vegas. Las Vegas predominates the state.

*All the gaming and the gambling and the hotels.*

And the population.

*I see.*

A million people in Las Vegas and so we're very much a minority. As far as agriculture is

concerned in Churchill County, its days are numbered in my opinion.

*Oh, my. That's kind of heartbreaking. You have two sons. Did your sons go into ranching and are they ranching with you?*

Gary, my oldest son, helped here on the ranch until he went to college. And he seemed to be allergic to everything. He had allergies and hay fever and he really suffered from it. And we knew that he was going to have to get away from the ranch and so he went to the University of Southern California. He had been down there about a year and a half and he called and said, "I want to come home." He was taking engineering and he said, "I just don't like it. I'm not going to be an engineer." And so Nina called his advisor and he said, "Well, I think it would be a good idea for Gary to go home and get his thoughts together." And so he came home and I had a piece of new ground that I wanted to level, so I put him on a tractor and a carryall. He spent six months leveling that piece of ground. And by the end of that six months, he knew for sure he wanted to go back to school. [laughter] So he did go back to school again and graduated from the University of Southern California and decided he wanted to go into the real estate business. He had to get away from the ranch on account of his hay fever and his asthma. And he came into Reno and went to work selling real estate. He just didn't like to sell real estate. He was more interested in the appraisal work. And so he started doing a lot of studying for appraisal. He had to work for somebody appraising for seven years before he could apply for an MAI. At the time he took the examination, there were only

2,500 MAI appraisers in the United States. In other words, you can appraise anywhere in the United States when you received this degree.

*Was that a master of arts in appraisal?*

Yes. Something like that.

*Where did he go to study that?*

Well, he studied there in Reno and also went back to Southern California to take courses during the different times. And he finally got his MAI and was in Reno. He was doing a lot of business in Las Vegas so he decided they'd move to Las Vegas and he has an exceptional business in Las Vegas. Bruce, our youngest son, stayed on the ranch and he has helped me all the time. In the last four or five years he's taken over active management of the ranch.

*He's good in all of the things?*

Yes. And he lives here on the ranch and lives in our old home. And he's doing a real good job as far as managing the ranch.

*Does he have a family?*

Yes. He's married and has two daughters. One of them is a beautician in Fallon. And the other is the shift boss for Hertz Car Rental at the Reno airport. She has done real . . . exceptionally well with Hertz.

*They're not going to be cowgirls?*

No. No. Neither one of them, I guess. And Gary also has two daughters and they both live in Las Vegas.

*Oh, so you now have a lot of girls in the family.*

Yes, four girls. One of Gary's daughters just graduated from the university and she is learning the appraisal business with her father.

*Oh, that's very smart. Now, when the girls were younger, especially your son here on the ranch, did they participate in the ranching? Did they ride horses and participate in it?*

Oh, yes. They were in 4-H. They used to rodeo in the 4-H rodeos. Both of them did. Yes.

*That's interesting. Now, from the time you were seven when your father gave you your first gun, you became an expert and loved the hunting. Let's carry through on something you loved so much as you were growing up, your hunting experiences.*

Well, I think hunting and fishing have been my recreation, my love. And I've always been interested in wildlife. When I was going to college, I had a fraternity brother whose father was the fireman at Berkeley. And they had a blind out on the San Francisco Bay. And he and I used to go out there.

*What did they have?*

They had a duck blind out on San Francisco Bay and we used to go out there and hunt ducks every chance we got.

*You brought your gun with you then?*

Oh, yes. And anyway, after I got out of college and came back to Fallon, I became very involved in the Greenhead Hunting

Club. Going back, my father bought me a membership in the Greenhead Hunting Club when it was first chartered.

*What is Greenhead Hunting Club?*

It's just a social hunting club.

*Is it a Churchill County club or is it statewide?*

Well, the members are. There are members statewide, yes. It's a stock company and my father bought me a share of stock in it. It was organized in 1919. And to my knowledge, I'm the only living member that is one of the original stock owners.

*Wow. Where are they home based?*

We have what is called the government pasture south of Fallon. We've had it leased for hunting for years, all through the years clear up until now.

*How much land is there?*

Oh, that marsh. I don't know how many acres there is. There must be fifty thousand acres in that marsh ground.

*Oh, my! Is there a lodge, too, or a place where you . . . ?*

Well, there was places where hunters brought their trailers and stayed during the hunting season and had little cabins there. They called it "Poacherville."

*Poacherville. How far out of Fallon is this?*

Oh, it's about ten-twelve miles out of Fallon . . . south of Fallon.

*Is there a marker? Does it show you?*

No. There's a sign as you're going out the highway. After you go by the Dodge Island Ranch about two miles, there's a sign that says "community pasture" I think it is. Or something like that. And anyway after I got out of college and come back, I was president of the Greenhead Club for two or three years.

*How old were you when you were president?*

Oh, twenty-three, twenty-four.

*Were you one of the youngest or were there a lot of young people in it.*

Well, there were quite a few young people in it.

*What was your role as president?*

Well, we always had a couple of what they call "shoots" each year. They chose up sides and counted the ducks . . . so much each duck counted. And then the loser of the side had to pay for the dinner for the other side. And it was quite an affair. I think at that time there were 150 members in the club. I don't know how many there are today.

*I'm sure all men.*

Yes. Oh, yes.

*Any women now?*

I couldn't tell you. I don't know. I was reading an article in *Outdoor Life* about Chukar partridge which was a bird in the Himalayan mountains in India. And this article described the terrain that to me

resembled what it looks like in the Stillwater Mountains. And I thought, well, if them birds survive there, then they might survive here. So I got in touch with a fraternity brother of mine in San Francisco, involved in export-import business and I asked him if we could get some chukars.

*How old were you when you were inquiring about this?*

Well, this was in 1933.

*Oh, my!*

So he finally come up with . . . we could have live trapped one hundred chukars . . . wild chukars live-trapped and put on a ship, delivered to San Francisco, for six hundred dollars. So at that time I was only making a hundred dollars a month, but I went for it.

*Really. You were probably single yet, right?*

Oh, yes. [laughter] Anyway, we ordered the birds and they were supposed to have been put on a steamer that would be ten days from Calcutta. They were put on this tramp steamer and they were forty-five days en route from the time they left Calcutta until they reached San Francisco. I had thirteen birds left alive. The rest had all died coming over. And I'm out six hundred dollars. So we brought the thirteen birds down to Stillwater here and fortunately there were six pairs and one extra male. [laughter]

*Where did you take them?*

We had pens and we started raising the birds.

*Oh. Here on your ranch?*

Here on the ranch.

*Do you have pictures? Any photographs of them?*

No, I don't have any. But anyway, there wasn't much known about them. And we would take the eggs from these chukars and gather them everyday. And when we'd get about a dozen eggs, we purchased a bunch of banty hens and we'd set them under a banty.

*You just figured what to do?*

Well, yes, there was a lot of guesswork. Nobody knew too much about it.

*Who was "we"? Who was doing it with you?*

My mother and I. She helped me with it.

*Your mother and you?*

Yes. Yes.

*Oh, how fascinating!*

And anyway, we would set these eggs under these banties. I had about a hundred banty hens that I had purchased around from every place that I could find them.

*Did they settle on the eggs?*

Yes, the banties set on the eggs and we'd set about ten-twelve eggs under each banty. And they would hatch the birds. And so it seemed like when the birds were got about three or four weeks old, they were getting sick and they were getting coccidiosis from the chickens. They'd get coccidiosis and die. So we then learned that as soon as these banties hatched these chukars, we'd take them away

from them and put them in a box with a light bulb for heat to incubate the little birds. And we ended up the first year with raising about a hundred birds as I recall.

*Were they meanwhile being all kept in cages on your ranch?*

Oh, yes. All kept in pens. And from those first birds we kept a few more for breeding stock and some of these birds were sold to Churchill County and some were sold to . . . I can't remember the exact number of counties. But we sold a few to each county and they were released. And then the next year we did a little bit better and a little better. And we'd sold breeding stock to other people and they started getting into the business.

*How did you advertise to sell it?*

Oh, we sold them to the various county commissioners.

*People you knew?*

Yes. People we knew. In fact, every county within the state of Nevada, in one way or another, acquired some of our chukars.

*Was there an excitement about this?*

Oh, yes. People were quite interested in them. By 1937 there was enough other people that got involved in the raising of the chukars that we quit. But when we first started selling these birds, we were selling them for six dollars a piece. And the people that wanted to buy pairs to go into business, we were getting fifteen dollars a pair for them.

*You didn't recoup your money very quickly. [laughter] You didn't do it for the money.*

No, I don't think that we ever did make any money out of it because the death loss we had at first and building the pens and everything, but it was the satisfaction of seeing these birds take ahold. Some parts of the state they didn't take ahold at all like down in Clark County, they didn't do any good. Northern Lander and Humboldt County, they didn't take ahold. Elko County they didn't . . . or [White Pine] County. But Churchill County and Southern Lander County and Storey and Mineral, Washoe, Northern Nye County, they really exploded there.

*So then people started to hunt them and kill them.*

Well, we had the first open season in 1948, and they had it open for three days for three birds per day as I recall it. And from then on the birds really took ahold. In fact, I think in the fifties and sixties, our populations were probably greater in the state than they have ever been. And of course, this drought that we're having nowadays, they've really declined.

*Do you stop hunting when they do?*

Oh, no. Last year, in my opinion, they should have reduced the season by quite a bit. They had the longest season they've ever had on record which I think really has hurt our breeding stock.

*Who decides on the length of the season?*

The Nevada Fish and Game department.

*I see.*

But then getting back to my hunting experiences, I had always loved to hunt deer.

The first deer that I ever saw in the Stillwater Mountains, I was sixteen years old. There were no deer in these mountains at that time. The first time I ever hunted a deer, I think was around 1930 when I was going to school and one of my fraternity brothers and I came up and went out to Austin and hunted deer. And we got a deer and we were really proud of that. But then I never killed a deer myself until . . . oh, I can't remember for sure, but it was in the latter part of the thirties before I ever shot a deer. We just didn't have deer. There was none around. And then the deer population really started. All at once, it was just exploding. And in the forties we had deer and numbers *really* building up in the fifties. There was deer everywhere.

*Did someone bring them in?*

I don't know if it's different . . . no, nobody brought deer in. I think it was in a different way that we was raising our livestock.

*More green stuff to eat?*

Well, the years back prior to the thirties, prior to the Taylor Grazing Act which was enacted in 1932. It was a federal grazing law. There was definitely too much livestock on the public lands and it was overgrazed and it was in bad condition. So after the Taylor Grazing Act went into effect, it cut the livestock numbers down a great deal from what they had been. And there was more concern about the ability of the land to produce forage. I think that was a start of when the deer numbers started coming up. And the deer numbers probably hit their peak in the fifties and sixties. And of course, the drought that we're going through in the last seven years has put a big decline back in the numbers again

which goes right back to the same thing . . . the forage production.

*It affects so many things.*

But I really love to hunt deer. And there was, oh, about a half a dozen of us that used to go every year. But in the last few years, of course, I haven't hunted any deer. Well, I did, too. I killed one last year right here on the ranch.

*I understand there's a limit of how many you are allowed to have?*

Yes. Yes. Oh, I don't remember when it went into effect, but you just went in and bought a deer tag. But you could only shoot one for the season . . . one buck. But back during the fifties, they had so many deer that you could get special tags for different places. And I think at one time you could have killed seven or eight deer per person, there was so many deer.

*Did you ever do that?*

No. I never did shoot over one. But now it's all on a drawing . . .

*A lottery?*

A lottery deal. And if you get drawn every other year, you're fortunate.

*Oh, my goodness! What did you do with the deer?*

Well, we ate them. Yes. Deer meat's real good, yes.

*Would you skin them and cut them?*

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.



*Freeze some of them?*

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

*Did you take your sons?*

Oh, yes.

*And do what your father did?*

Oh, yes. I started both boys hunting. They were both about, oh, I'd say about seven years old . . . about my age when I started hunting. And both of them became very good . . . good shots. And of course, Gary has never hunted as much because he's been in Las Vegas, but Bruce dearly loves it and followed right in my footsteps. [laughter]

*Do you do a lot of that together?*

Yes, we do. But then going back, the first year Nevada had a sheep hunting season with a drawing was 1952. They were going to issue fifty tags on a drawing and they were all in the Las Vegas area. And Nina, my wife, put in as well as I did. She was drawn number one on that drawing.

*Really! [laughs]*

And I was drawn as fifty-one. [laughter]  
Well, anyway Nina went.

*Did she hunt?*

Yes. And the season was only for three days and we had a guide that was a buckaroo and he didn't know any more about sheep hunting than we did. And anyway, she didn't get one. And we did see a sheep. But that interested me in sheep. And so in 1957

a friend of mine who ran a commercial fishing operation in Alaska asked me to come up to Alaska and go sheep hunting with him. And that's when I first become involved in hunting sheep. I killed a Dall sheep that year. And that really got into my blood. And I hunted sheep every year thereafter.

*Up in Alaska?*

In Alaska I hunted. I hunted in the Northwest territory. I hunted in the Yukon. I hunted in Alberta. I hunted in Montana. I hunted in Nevada. I guess that's all.

*Who did you go with?*

In Montana for sheep with different guides. You'd hire a guy to go hunting. In fact, I've got three grand slams. A grand slam is a Dall, a stone, a desert ram, and a Bighorn ram which comprises a grand slam. And I had three grand slams.

*Is that in one hunting season?*

No. No. That's during my lifetime of hunting. And there probably isn't over a dozen people in the United States that have three grand slams.

*Now, was there an organization or a journal or a newsletter? How did you know where all these places were where you could . . . ?*

Well, advertising. See, these outfitters advertised.

*Was there a certain publication that you got?*

Oh, yes. In all your sporting magazines. Yes. In all your outdoor sporting magazines.

*Were you the only one in your hunting crowd that did all of this from your Greenhead Hunting Club?*

Well, see . . . no, no. This has nothing to do with the Greenhead Hunting Club.

*No, but I thought maybe hunters in that club would be interested in . . .*

Oh, no. When you go sheep hunting, you always hunt by yourself with your guide.

*Oh, you went with your guide. I see.*

Yes. Then you go with a guide or an outfitter.

*So it'd be quiet, not too . . .*

Yes. Oh, yes. The sheep eyesight is equivalent to about an eight power field glass system. And they're probably one of the toughest animals that there are to hunt.

*Well, describe one of your hunting expeditions. What you would do, where you would stay, how you would do this.*

Well, I'll take one that was up in the Yukon. I hunted in the Yukon three different times with the same outfitter, Dennis Callison. And he used to take four hunters at a time. When I say he took four hunters, he had four guides and each guide took a hunter. He was the outfitter that put the thing together. His outfit was out of White Horse so we flew from here or I drove up there twice.

*Where is White Horse?*

White Horse is in the Yukon.

*Oh, OK. You drove there.*

We drove up there. That's on the Alcan Highway.

*Who is "we"?*

Nina drove up with me and then flew on up to Alaska to Anchorage to visit her sister while I was hunting. I flew from White Horse out to his base camp with a float plane. On a float plane you land on water, you know. And then from there, you'd be out at Dennis's base camp where his home would be, and his four guides and his horses, and so we'd take pack horses. And from there you'd go with your guide and you camped out.

*Did you have little pup tents? He would set it all up?*

Yes. Yes. Yes. And yes, you hunted from out of the camp each day.

*You cooked over an open fire?*

Yes. Yes. And that's more or less how it works. In fact, one hunting trip that I was on, that was down in British Columbia, there was four hunters, a cook, and a horse wrangler, and four guides, and an outfitter and we had twenty-eight head of horses. Altogether it took us three days to pack from the highway back into where we was going to hunt. And then we were back in there hunting for two weeks and three days back out again.

*Oh, my. When you . . . when you would shoot one of these, how did they bring it back?*

They were all skinned out right at the time and then . . .

*Right where . . . wherever you shot them?*

Yes. Yes. They were skinned out. And the meat was always eaten right there.

*Oh, you cooked them?*

Oh, yes. Because we were camped out there for a couple of weeks.

*So did you have a camp and you would just ride out and come back?*

Yes. Right.

*So you cooked it every night.*

Oh, yes. See, we had a cook at the camp.

*Oh, that must have been wonderful.*

Oh, yes. And sheep meat is the delicacy of all your wild game animals.

*So you didn't bring anything home?*

I have brought a little home a time or two, but it's too hard to get home.

*Mainly it's the sport of it.*

Yes. Yes, it's the sport and the trophy you have, you know.

*So the guides are locked into verifying for the trophy?*

That's right. Yes. It's trophy is what it is.

*Oh, how fabulous.*

But the meat is a delicacy. The sheep meat is. It's really exceptionally good.

*Boy, those adventures because your love are the highlights of your life.*

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And besides the sheep, I've shot two mountain goats and five or six caribou and a moose and a bear and . . . oh, hunting is, like I say, has been my life.

*So about how often would you do this? Once a year would you go hunting?*

Oh, yes. Once a year. And a couple of times twice a year.

*As things got where you could get away.*

Yes. Yes.

*Did your son ever do that?*

Oh, yes. Bruce, the first time he went sheep hunting he was sixteen and he got a sheep.

*Oh, my!*

And he got involved in it. And he also has two grand slams.

*Really?*

Yes.

*Oh, so he's followed in Daddy's footsteps.*

That's right. That's right.

*Did your dad ever do that?*

No. No. My dad hunted deer a little bit, that was all. In fact, I think Dad only killed two deer in his lifetime. There weren't no deer here.

*I see. I see. And so you read about the sheep in one of these bulletins and it intrigued you, or did you know someone who had done that?*

Well, I had known about it, you know, you read these stories in *Outdoor Life* and *Field and Stream* . . . any sport [magazine].

*Did you know anyone else who had done that?*

No. At the time I started to hunt, I didn't know . . . no, it just interested me.

*That's fascinating. And when's the last time you did that?*

The last time I went sheep hunting . . . let me think. The last time I hunted sheep was 1989. I hunted up in Alaska.

*What time of year would you go?*

It's normally in August. Well, down here in the States, the season normally here is in October. But in Canada and Alaska, it's normally August because by the time September comes around, it's too cold.

*Yes. And it starts to get dark.*

Yes. And it gets cold.

*And here you had almost all light.*

Yes. Yes. Yes.

*That sounds like a wonderful experience.*

Oh, yes.

*Now, tell me a little bit about your fishing experiences. I know in the early days you went with your Chinese cook.*

Yes.

*Well, let's bring it up to your adult life.*

Well, I really didn't do too much fishing except with my mother over to Sierra Valley in California where she was born. Her folks lived over there. And we used to go over there in the summertime for a week, ten days, maybe two weeks, and she'd visit her folks and they had a lot of trout fishing in the creeks over there. My cousin who lived over there and I used to go fishing practically everyday. We sure kept everybody supplied with fish, too. [laughter] And then after that, we didn't do much fishing here in Nevada until, oh, after I got out of college, used to do quite a bit of fishing out in the creeks around Austin.

*The Toiyabe Forest and Kingston areas?*

Yes, right. Right. And then we have gone up on the Oregon and Washington coast salmon fishing probably ten-twelve times. My wife and I and our families have all gone. We haven't done near as much fishing as I have hunted.

*The hunting is more your favorite, right?*

Yes. And in fact, even last year I went back to North Dakota pheasant hunting . . . took Gary and Bruce with me. That was in October. And then in December, Bruce and I went down to Texas quail and turkey hunting. So I'm still hunting.

*Good. I'm glad to hear that. That's wonderful. It kind of ties in a little bit. I'm curious about the wildlife viewing area out here.*

The wildlife area out here, the refuge part, was set into a refuge in 1948. There

was three of us delegated by a committee by the county commissioners to choose which area was to be for the refuge and which area was to be for the public hunting ground. Jim Woods and Rollie Kolstrup were the other two on the committee. We met with the Fish and Wildlife people from Washington D.C. and we reached an agreement that where the present wildlife refuge is would be alternated with the open public hunting ground. One year, it would be a refuge and the next year it would be open hunting. But after all the papers were drawn up and everybody signed the dots and everything, they would not go with that. They wanted the refuge to remain in the same place. But I was very much opposed to their putting a refuge in to start with. In fact, I fought it very hard. My reasoning was that we practically had a refuge in here already because so much of the water was inaccessible, you had to either get there by boat or walk to do any hunting. And after the refuge was taken over or opened up, they practically ruined the hunting because they put a road around every lake there was down there and all the tules were killed so there's no habitat for the birds. In my opinion, it's done nothing but steadily go downhill every since they took it over in 1948.

*What kind of wildlife is there in that area?*

Well, a lot of shore birds and ducks and geese. Oh, practically all the species of ducks . . . green-winged tailed, blue-wing tailed, cinnamon-tailed, a shoveler, a redhead . . . which is this big nesting ground in here . . . used to be a big nesting ground for the redhead. A canvas back, wigeon, pintail, mallard, and has been a few scaup in here, gadwall, and of course white geese, lesser Canadian honker, and the Canadian honker.

*Boy, you sure know your birds. How many people come to visit the viewing area?*

I couldn't tell you.

*Do you see many cars coming or buses?*

Oh, occasionally they'll have a bus out there. Oh, maybe on a weekend, you'll see two or three cars, but due to the fact that they don't have hardly any water left in there anymore, there's not that much of an attraction because there's not that much for people to see.

*While I've been here on your ranch interviewing you, I've seen some of the wonderful birds you're talking about around your ranch.*

Yes. I believe that outside of the numbers, we probably have more of a variety of the birds right here on the ranch that joins the refuge than what the refuge has. And in fact, song birds, you very rarely see any in the refuge and we have a lot of them here on the ranch. And of course, we have a lot of quail and quite a number of deer here on the ranch. And for individual species of birds, we have far more here than the refuge does.

*Well, I know I've been enjoying them. Now, what we haven't talked about is wintertime in this region. And tell me what it is like in the winters and if you have had any hard winters here on your ranch while you've been here.*

Well, going back to when I was a boy, every winter my father cut ice on the ponds here. And that ice would get sixteen-eighteen inches thick. Today, it's very rare that you will ever see ice over a couple of inches. In fact, you don't get enough ice even for the kids to skate on anymore. But as far as hard winters, the winter in 1936-37, Nina and I was living in

Fallon and I recall that the snow was so deep on Maine Street that they had it piled up about six to eight feet high right in the middle of the street so if you went from one side of the street to the other, you had to crawl over this snowbank. Nina and I didn't have anything to heat our house with except a fireplace. And we'd like to froze to death until . . . well, we did have a kitchen stove, a wood stove. But we'd like to froze to death until we could get an oil stove put in that house. It was terrible. And that winter, it got down into the thirty below zero area. And then the winter of 1948 and 1949 I think was a lot worse. In fact, it probably was one of the worst winters we've had. All of our cattle were out on the mountain and it started to snow and it kept snowing and finally the snow got about three feet deep in the hills and was about eighteen inches to two feet deep here in the valley. And we knew we had to gather our cattle. And in the daytime the warmest it ever got in a six week period was, as I remember, zero and from zero on down to thirty-five and forty below zero at night. Very unusual . . . very unusual. And we had to gather all those cattle because they had nothing to eat out there and all the food . . . the grass and brush was covered with snow.

*Were you living on the ranch then?*

Yes. Yes. And four of us started gathering our cattle and we were six weeks in that time trying to gather them all. We finally ended up we was thirteen short and presumed they were dead. And that spring along about April, they showed up and had made it. But they had what they called the "hay lift" that same winter. The snow was so bad out around Ely that they had flying boxcars that they brought into the Navy base out here and they'd load them with hay, fly out to Ely and so many of

the cattle and sheep are isolated, they'd fly over them and drop the bale of hay out for them to eat.

*Oh, my goodness! Were you able to travel on the roads? Were you able to get to your animals? What transportation did you use?*

Well, out here on our range, no. We could just get to the foot of the hill and we had to go horseback. We'd leave every morning at daybreak and you didn't dare get off your horse during the day. And the snow was so deep that you'd get your feet wet and you'd get frostbitten. So you'd sit in that saddle until sometimes at nights you'd get home eight or nine o'clock. In fact, one night it was two o'clock in the morning before we got home. And you'd be so stiff that you couldn't hardly straighten up. The night that we got home at two o'clock . . . Irving Sanford and I picked up a bunch of cattle down toward Frenchman's and started toward Mountain Well with them and it started to snow. And you couldn't see over about a hundred feet. We followed the cattle instead of going where we should have gone. We finally ended up over in the head of Diamond Canyon and it was dark. And started down Diamond and finally I recognized a bluff and I knew we were a long ways from where we should be. So we turned the cows loose and started back to the truck. And we went over the highest mountain peaks in the whole range right there that night and the horses gave out and we just had a terrible time getting back to the truck.

*Oh, my goodness. When the weather got below zero, did the water supplies freeze?*

Oh, yes.

*How did you handle water for the animals?*



Oh, the cows eat snow. They don't do good on it. They get by, but all the water troughs were froze solid. In fact, there was just a solid block of ice in every trough. And the cattle, they'll eat snow and get by, but it's hard on them. They shrink up pretty bad.

*So how many winters was it like that?*

Just the winter of . . . it started in December of 1948 and went into the January and February of 1949.

*Were you pretty much restricted to the ranch? Were those roads into Fallon cleared or were you able to use them?*

We had to clear them here on the ranch, but the roads into Fallon were cleared so you could get into Fallon. But the only way you could get around out in the mountains was horseback. Of course, out in the eastern part of the state, they were even feeding their cattle and sheep right on the highway. The highway department had cleared off the snow and of course, there wasn't any travel, so they would . . . some of those places they were dropping the hay right on the highways for the sheep.

*Dropping the hay? Dropping the hay and they would come to the roads?*

Yes.

*Anything else that you want to tell me about the winters?*

Well, since then we haven't really had any hard winters. When Gary was in high school, we had one with heavy snow storms. It was the last heavy one I remember. There was about eighteen inches here at the ranch, but I don't remember what year it was. But

we just haven't had the snow and the cold winters. We've had some winters it got cold down below zero, but nothing real bad like it was in those two winters.

*I want to take you back to the war years for a few topics. The first one, you mentioned there were some hardships and I know gasoline was rationed and it cut down your travelling. During those years, how did you get water for your cattle?*

As I stated previously, the Navy had all of our range except the southern part of it. And we could run cattle there only in the wintertime. So to pump water, my dad would take a barrel of gas out, which is fifty gallons, and leave it at the well. And I would go every day horseback and go out and start the pump. And it was six miles over to the well and six miles back. So I had to go every day whether it was snowing or how cold it was, it didn't make a bit of difference. But after I had done that for a few days, I thought, "Gee, I'm wasting a lot of time just going for a ride." So I thought, "Well, I'll start setting some traps." Coyotes were worth about ten or twelve dollars apiece for their hides and cats were worth about the same. So I started setting traps out so that when I'd go out, I'd have a string of traps, and when I'd come home, I'd come home a little different way. And during that winter, I caught approximately a hundred coyotes, which was real good money for those days. And about a dozen or fifteen bobcats.

*Wow! Who skinned them?*

Well, I skinned them all. When I'd find them in the trap, I would kill them and skin them right there and then tie the hide on behind my saddle horse.

*Who bought them? Who bought these skins?*

Oh, there was a lot of hide buyers that would come around in those days. And usually in the spring, they'd show up and want to know if you had any hides to sell. And you'd do a lot of dickering with them. They'd start out at eight dollars and you'd finally get them up to about what they was worth. [laughter] And it was quite a process.

*I've never heard about that. Did they find you here on the ranch?*

Oh, yes. Yes.

*Really?*

Well, word gets around by word of mouth that I was trapping and I had some hides and . . .

*How many traps would you be setting?*

Oh, I had about sixty traps set out.

*Wow! Were they wired cage-like traps?*

No. No. Spring traps. Number three spring trap. I recall one time I got sick. I had the flu. And Nina had been out with me a few times and she knew pretty well where the traps was. I had been in bed for a couple of days and I told Nina . . . I said, "You better see if I got any coyotes in the traps." So she took the car. We only got ten gallons of gas a month for the car, so we didn't use it very much. But anyway, she took the car. And Gary at that time was only . . . I don't know, five or six years old, along with her. First set of traps she come to, I had a bobcat in it. So she didn't have any way to kill the bobcat, she forgot to take the twenty-two. So she got the tire iron out and finally hit the bobcat in the head with the tire iron and got the cat. And

then she came back and got the twenty-two and she went on around and she had five more coyotes. And when she got back to the house, she come in the bedroom and said, "Well, you better come out and look in the trunk of the car. I'm not too sure that all of them coyotes are dead." [laughter] But they all were.

*Oh, it must have been a mess in the back of that car.*

It was in the trunk of the car.

*Right. Did you have to clean that up?*

Yes. Yes. A little bloody.

*Oh, my. It's amazing to me how your mind works because you catch all these opportunities and think of very creative ways to use your time.*

Yes.

*It's a wonderful story. One of the things I don't think I asked. When you first were coming out to the ranch, what kind of roads were there between here and Fallon?*

Well, as I recall when we first used to go to Fallon was in a buggy. I think I mentioned it earlier in my first interview, it was all dirt roads, you know. We used to go in with horse and buggy.

*Right. When did they oil the roads and then pave the roads?*

In the fall of 1936, I believe it was. It was when they oiled the road down to Stillwater.

*Was that under WPA or any plan?*

No. No. The Dodge brothers had the construction job.

*Oh, Dodge Construction.*

In fact, the bridge that goes over Stillwater there, they had just poured the concrete when it turned cold and it froze all the concrete. And they had to repour the bridge again which cost them a lot of money.

*I'm very impressed with the superior road driving out here to Stillwater. Was that when the wildlife viewing was put in and the government was back there? When did the really modern road that comes out here . . . close to your place. When did all that get put in?*

Well, that road was rebuilt . . . I don't remember now . . . seven or eight years ago. The original road that the Dodge's put in 1936-37 deteriorated so bad that it was like driving through a mine field zig-zagging back around the pot holes. And people down here in Stillwater are kind of minority because there's not that many of us. [laughter] Couldn't get the state to rebuild the road. And we kept trying and trying. And we were way down on the list as far as a priority so I got up a petition. And I said, "We get enough people to sign this petition, maybe we can get something done."

*You were a leader again.*

So I got up the petition and I had everybody here in Stillwater sign it and business people that had business to do out here and also everybody in the Indian reservation signed it. And I took it over to the governor. And it was governor Bryan at that time. And I said, "I have this petition to rebuild the Stillwater Road." And he called

over and had the state highway engineer come over and he questioned him about the road and he told him it was real bad. And he says, "Well, move the priority up to the top." So the next year we got our road resurfaced and we have a real nice road coming out here.

*So people have to be very grateful. While we're still in those years around the war and pre-war, one of the things that Churchill County is looking for is more information on the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. Do you have any recollections or knowledge or firsthand information about that period when they were here?*

Well, yes. We had a CCC camp right west of Fallon right at the Y where one road goes toward the college and the other road goes toward Reno. It's at about where Western Auto Supply is.

*Oh, yes.*

And that camp, the boys there did work on the irrigation project. Pretty near all the structures that were in the project here at the time were all wooden structures. And they took out those wooden structures and put cement structures in. In fact, if you look on a lot of these structures, you will see CCC on them. They did a lot of good work here in the valley, and really helped the irrigation project. And after it was abandoned, they put one of the buildings up for sale out there and our present home is from one of those CCC buildings. It was 120 feet long by 20 feet wide and we cut it into three pieces and brought it down to use for frame for our present house. There was another CCC camp at East Gate. And that camp, the boys were doing work on the ranges working on springs . . . opening springs up, putting

troughs in, building fences . . . drift fences, fences between operators and such as that. I recall one day I was out there horseback and they was building what they call the Laplatta fence.

*What kind of fence?*

Laplatta drift fence at the head of a canyon. And a little boy there, he probably didn't weigh 110 pounds, had this cedar post and he's trying to pack it up the hill. And the post probably weighed two hundred pounds. And he'd pack it about ten feet and drop it. And I said, "Hand me the post and I'll put it here in front of my saddle and pack it up the hill for you."

He says, "Oh, no." He said, "If I did that, I'd be in real trouble." He said, "I have to pack that up there myself." [laughter] It was kind of amusing at the time. But the poor guy, he was sure suffering for it. It was in August. Hot. And he was really sweating it out.

*Oh, my. Were most of them quite young?*

Yes. Yes. He was probably about eighteen years old.

*Eighteen. Were any of different ethnic groups that came?*

Any what?

*Did you see any different ethnic groups like any Mexican or black kids from the South?*

No. No. I don't recall any black boys being there, colored boys. They were all white boys. Most of the boys we had here from the East coast . . . a lot of them were from New York and New Jersey and back through there. In fact, when the camps closed up . . . I don't

remember now, but there were a dozen or fifteen or more that stayed right here at Fallon and married and were going into business and were real successful business people.

*Do you know anyone yet from the CCC? I sure would love to interview someone. I can't seem to locate any. If you should think of any, you'll let me know.*

All right, I will.

*Because that would be good to interview them for their personal experiences.*

The museum might be able to tell you if there's anybody alive yet.

*Well, they haven't been able to tell me.*

Oh, they haven't been able to find any?

No.

Well, they've probably have all passed away.

*Maybe.*

I just can't think of anybody right off-hand.

*Now, when you bought that building, was it like a barracks?*

Yes.

*Was it built pretty sturdy?*

Oh, yes. The floor was a double floor and the rafters are two-by-sixes and the floor joists are two-by-sixes. It was really built strong because there was a lot boys sleeping

in each one of them. And of course, they had a cookhouse.

*Did all of them sell?*

Yes. They all sold.

*They all sold fast?*

Yes.

*Was it first come, first serve? Auctions?*

No, it was on a bid.

*On a bid . . . auction bid. You're the first one who's told me anything about that. That's pretty interesting.*

Yes.

*Over the past few years, I've been working with the Churchill County museum and I see them as one of the finest examples of a rural museum. I understand you had some role in the start of that. Can you begin from the beginning and tell us what you know about the start of that wonderful museum?*

Yes. Safeway store was located in what the present museum is now. And evidently the store was in the wrong location or something because they didn't have it open too many years and decided they should move it back downtown because it was affecting their business. So they closed the store up and it sat idle for a couple of years, and a friend of mine from down at Newport Beach, California, by the name of Alex Oser came here at the ranch hunting a lot. In fact, he was up here, oh, eight or ten times every fall and a few times during the summer. And he said to me, "Hammy," he said, "You know that Safeway building out

there, they want to sell that. And I think I can buy it." He said, "What would it be good for, for the county?"

At that time, the library was looking for a new building. And I said, "Well," I said, "it would make an awful good library." I said, "Churchill County is looking for a building to house a library, and I think that if it could be acquired, it would make a real nice library."

He said, "All right." He said, "I'll see if I can make a deal with Safeway." Well, it went on for about a year and a half and Alex called me one day on the phone and he said, "Well," he said, "I just bought that Safeway building." He said, "Now what are we going to do with it?" [laughter]

I said, "Well, they already built a library. They passed a bond issue and built a library." I said, "But Churchill County really needs a museum."

He said, "Do you think it'll go over?"

And I said, "Yes, I do." I said, "We've got some very influential people around Fallon here that have been very interested in having a museum." And I said, "I'm sure it will go over."

And he said, "Well, if you're sure it'll go over," he said, "I'll come up and I'll donate the building to the Churchill County for a museum." Which he did. And when we got the Safeway building, the floors were in terrible shape, the roof leaked, and it looked like it was kind of a bad deal we had walked into. But with cooperation of everybody and donations and the county stepped in and started helping. It was tough for the first couple of years because we just had so much to be done to get it off the ground floor. And Willie Capucci and Doris Drumm and Grace Kendrick and my wife, Nina, and . . . oh, I don't know. I'd hate to miss somebody's name, but there were a lot of people . . . the Luke brothers . . . they were all involved in this. I think it's probably one of the outstanding museums we have in



the state of Nevada. And that was kind of the history of how we acquired . . .

*Not only the finest in Nevada, but of the rural museums almost anywhere, you know.*

I imagine it is.

*It is. Now, when the building was turned over to the county, was there already a historical society or did that start after the building was given to the county?*

I can't say for sure. Nina probably could tell you.

*All right.*

Bud Berney was also interested in it at that time. And Willie Capucci and Doris Drumm and Bud and a few of them were really pushing to have a museum. I had never even thought about it until this all came up. In fact, I hadn't even gotten interested in it.

*Now, when the building was turned over, were collections already being accumulated through a historical society or did that all start with the building? Do you know that?*

Well, I would say most of it started when we got the building. At first, we wanted to keep the museum to things that were local within Churchill County. And there was a lot nice things that were here in Churchill County. In fact, one of the things that led Mr. Oser to go for the museum was the fact that the Luke brothers had probably one of the best arrowhead collections that you could find anywhere. And when Alex talked to them, they said that they would be happy to donate their arrowhead collection to the museum. And Alex said, "Well, we'll see if we can't have

a special room set up for that collection." Well, in the meantime, one of the Luke brothers died and the other brother had remarried and evidently he must have left his collection to his wife because the museum didn't get any of it.

*Oh, what a shame. I understand that you had some earthquakes in Churchill County. Did you experience any of them?*

Yes. The first earthquake that I recall was probably about 1933 or 1934. I was living at my grandfather and grandmother's house in Fallon. And we had an earthquake during the night and my bedroom was right over the top of the furnace. And I was sure I was going to end up in that furnace. It certainly did shake the house. And then I think it was the same year or the following year, we were fishing down to Walker Lake and had an earthquake that day. And the lake all at once was great, big waves, and the cars on the shoreline were jumping up and down. And it was quite a sight. It's the first time that I ever saw a car jump up and down. Then in 1952 we had three.

*Three!*

The first one came about four-thirty in the morning on . . . I think it was July 6. I had let my men lay off for the fourth and was just about to finish up on irrigating. And I got up and I was standing at the front door here waiting for Gary to go help me change the water. We had one more change to make. Gary was sitting in an overstuffed chair and putting his shoes on. And we didn't have carpets in here, it was all hardwood floors. And that earthquake hit and I hollered "Earthquake!" And it knocked me out of the front door and I landed on my hands and knees on the sidewalk in front of the house. And the



waves were running, I would say, between ten and twelve feet high . . . the ground waves were. Because from where I was laying on the sidewalk in front of the house, I saw the chimney from the fireplace and chimney from the furnace room both blow over and I didn't know whether they went into the house or out of the house. And I was hollering at Gary, "Are you all right?" But he couldn't hear me. And as I found out later, it knocked him out of the chair and he was sliding across the floor. And he'd get pretty near the fireplace, then the wave would go the other way and he'd pretty near go out the window and back and forth. And Nina could hear me hollering . . . trying to holler at Gary. She was in bed and she was trying to get out of bed and she couldn't even get out of bed. But anyway, the mountains out here lit up just like Christmas time. They later said that it was on account of the friction of the rocks . . .

*Really?*

Sliding together, that it lit it all up. And in the fields the next day, there was big piles of sand that looked like anthills only they was ten or twelve feet across where the water had come from up from real deep down and pushed that sand up there. And the irrigation ditch that we had the water in was turned upside down. When Gary and I got out there to try to change the water, there was no ditch left. The bottom of the ditch was up higher than the sides of the ditch. And we started to walk across there and all at once . . . it was still kind of breaking day and we got into water clear up over knees. And I said, "We better get out of here," which we did. And we had two dogs and they left and we never saw them for a couple of days. And the horses were whinnying and the cows were bawling. And it uprooted big cottonwood trees right

above the house here. Took them up right by the roots. It was really something. In our refrigerator, we had a gallon jar of milk and it turned that jar of milk upside down. And we tried to do that afterwards and couldn't do it. So it twisted the refrigerator enough to turn that jar of milk over upside down. And we had one dish left in our whole house. There was so many people coming in and out of here, it was hard to keep up with. But the next morning, my nephew called . . . he was working on a paper in Sacramento. And he said, "I see your picture in the paper." A photographer from the Sacramento paper was in our kitchen, which we didn't even know, and taking pictures of all the broken dishes on the floor. And Nina happened to be standing there. That's how he happened to know it was our house.

*He came all the way up here to Stillwater, up here to your place?*

Yes. And it emptied the water troughs that the cattle drank out of. Threw all of the water out of them. The irrigation canals . . . the district canals, most of them it had just emptied them. And a lot of them it turned them inside out up through the Indian reservation. As it turned out, that first earthquake, the corner of our house was right under the fault.

*Really? Did you know there was a fault here?*

No. We never knew it.

*Was there ever another earthquake here before that 1952 one?*

Not to my knowledge. The Wildlife Shop, which also was on the earthquake center, it turned over a fifty ton press, threw butane

tanks out of the back of the pick-ups. So it was real severe. And our artesian well up here where my men live, it broke the pipe off down about forty feet underground. And the artesian well up where Bruce lives, it shut it clear off and it has never filled again.

*So it was worse here than in the town of Fallon.*

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

*Did anyone get killed or badly hurt?*

No. Nobody was killed. But out at the Navy base, the boys out there thought that they were being bombed and several of them got hurt jumping out of the windows out of the dormitory. But in town, a Las Vegas bus had been parked in the alleyway between the Sagebrush and the Western Hotel. And it just pulled away when the earthquake hit. Part of the Western Hotel fell down into the alley or somebody probably would have gotten hurt. We were real fortunate, we were real fortunate nobody was seriously hurt.

*What did it do to the animals?*

It frightened them awful bad.

*Did some run away?*

No. Of course, they're all fenced in. We had an awful lot of aftershocks. About two weeks after that, an Indian who was working here for me by the name of Frank Dyer . . . he and I were moving a bunch of cattle, and all at once they stopped. And our saddle horses stopped. About the time they stopped, the earthquake hit. And they could feel it before we could. The horses stood with their legs spread out bracing themselves because they

evidently knew what was going to happen. As soon as the quake was over, they walked on again.

*Oh, that is an amazing story. I'll look at the pictures after the interview.*

And then in August we had another earthquake which followed the Stillwater mountains on the west side. And that one didn't do as much damage to us as it did further up the road a ways. At my mother's house, the first one didn't hardly do anything and the second one tipped her refrigerator over and did quite a lot of things. But about halfway up toward Perazzo's, it split the highway open. And then there was a lady coming home that night from town and she had imbibed a little bit, and she drove with two wheels right into that fault which is about three or four deep in the middle of the highway. And like to scare her to death, I guess. And going back to the first one, up where my mother lived, she had a lot of chickens and she lost all of the chickens. The fault was so bad right in there where the chicken yard was, they all fell down in the cracks. Never did find any chickens again.

*Now, was she alone when the earthquake happened?*

Yes. She was alone.

*How did she handle that?*

Oh, she made it all right. It scared her a little bit.

*Probably scared about all of you.*

Yes. As much as anything.

*I didn't realize the earthquake was that bad.*

And then in the December of that same year, we had another earthquake and it followed the Stillwater mountains at the base of the hill on the east side. It didn't shake as bad in here as the other two did. But the captain at the Navy base here at Fallon who was a very good friend of mine, called me that morning after the earthquake. And he said, "Hammy," he said, "we want you to go out with us and we're going to fly that fault and take pictures of it. We want you to go along to tell us the names of the various canyons and so forth." And so they flew down here and picked me up and we flew out to Dixie and we photographed the whole fault from back of Fairview peak clear on down the Stillwater range of mountains to where the fault ended and back up on the other side of the valley. There was a small fault along there. And the whole thing was photographed and we flew for six hours. And I would sure like to know where those pictures went because nobody's ever seen them that I know of. And it might pay to inquire with the Navy people and see if they've still got those pictures because they should be in the museum.

*Oh, OK. I understand that you were on the Carson City District Advisory Board. Do you want to start from the very beginning and tell us your involvement in that board?*

Yes. I was elected to go on the board, I can't remember the exact year, but it was probably about 1954. And I have served ever since on the Carson City District Advisory Board. And during that time, I served as chairman for several years. And of course, now under the Clinton administration, the board has been done away with. But my

term on there has been very rewarding and I have learned a lot about different livestock operations within the Carson City District.

*Now, because I don't know anything about it and what you just told me doesn't give me very much light, I'm going to ask you a few questions so that you can give more details. Who did the advisory board give advice to and what are some of the things you covered and what were your responsibilities?*

I'll start out by saying that to be elected on the board, there were people who were using the federal lands. The range users have the election and you are nominated by your peers and that is how you become a board member. Under the Taylor Grazing Act, it was set up that the advisory board would give advice to the Bureau of Land Management personnel on range projects . . . well, originally we gave advice on range projects and livestock numbers. In fact, our position was real strong because we could practically tell the district manager that we wanted a certain project done and he would have to go through with it. But then in later years they amended it so that we were just advisors. At first, we weren't advisors. We gave information as to what they should be doing. And at the time I went on the board, in the Carson City District there was only five employees. And I might say today I don't know how many there are, but it's over a hundred doing practically the same job. And we got a lot done back in those days, also. After we came on the advisory board, the district manager would have different projects lined up that he wanted to do during the year. They would be brought before us to give him advice as to whether they should do them or shouldn't do them. And most of the projects were acceptable. Once or twice we got into

projects that we wouldn't approve. And I was very pleased that if we didn't approve a project, they backed off from it and dropped it.

*I have a couple of questions because I need some clarification again. The Carson City District, what does that area cover? Because you're here in Fallon. What is the Carson City District?*

The Carson City District included all of Churchill County, all of Mineral County . . . let's see, Esmeralda County, Carson City County, Storey County, Washoe County, part of Mono County in California, and part of Lassen County in California.

*That's a huge area. I'm glad that you told us that. Now, the other question I have because I want more specifics. You talked about projects. Select a few major projects that you feel were maybe some of the most worthwhile that you helped see get through. Describe some of the projects.*

Well, some of the fencing projects I think that we pushed for along these highways. The highway department wouldn't fence some of the highways and we as a board felt that these bad spots where cattle were crossing the highway and people were getting killed, had to be fenced. And we really pushed for them. And then we'd have fencing projects between two different operators and the operators weren't getting along. And one of them would say, "Well, too many cows of yours are on my property." And too many are on somebody else's property. And we would really push hard to get fences between the two property owners so that it would end these disputes and the drifting of cattle.

*And how long did you serve on that board?*

Approximately forty years.

*Oh, my gosh! Were you the main one from Fallon? The longest one from Fallon?*

Oh, yes. I was by far the longest one there. In fact, I have been the only one from Fallon since . . . oh, I guess since I went on the board.

*That's remarkable. And then you were voted by your peers in all those counties?*

Right. Right. Right.

*Were you involved in some organization where you got acquainted with all of these people before you were on the board?*

Oh, no. No. It just seemed like I knew so many people around different places and they knew who I was and that we were ranchers and interested in the resources.

*Well, that's quite an honor that I know you deserve. Now, another committee that you belong to that I want to hear a lot about is the United States Agriculture and Conservation committee. Can you tell me about your participation in that?*

Yes. Senator Bible was in the Senate at the time and President Kennedy was just elected. And Senator Bible called on the phone from Washington and wanted to know if I would be willing to serve on the Agriculture Stabilization Committee from Nevada. And I said, "I would be pleased to." There was only three that are appointed on that committee. So I accepted the appointment and I served during Kennedy's administration up until the time he was assassinated. And then under President

Johnson. And Johnson, while he was in his office on his full term. So I served for eight years on the Agriculture Stabilization Committee.

*Now, tell me in some detail what kind of activity you participated in on the committee and how you did it and what was accomplished.*

Well, we met once a month.

*Where?*

In Reno. Our office for the state was in Reno. And at that time we had county offices in practically all the counties in the state. And each county has a county manager. And programs that the county would think should be instigated in a lot of instances were brought before the state committee for a decision on whether they thought they would be all right for land leveling or cement ditches. And those were probably two of the most popular projects. It all had to be done on private land. None could be done on federal land. In other words, somebody that had a Forest Service or BLM permit could qualify for that. Even the water wells come under it. Like I say, the two other items were probably the most used items. And it was on a cost sharing basis. The state was allocated so much money each year. Say, for example, we were allocated \$300,000 for the year for conservation practices such as leveling land and drain ditches or whatever. And then we . . . the state reallocated those funds back to the different counties. Our allocation was based on how much work the county did within that county. Some counties are small and didn't have too much agriculture, so they didn't have much use for the funds or couldn't qualify for a lot of the practices while other counties would use considerable amount of

the money. Also, they had programs wherein you couldn't plant a certain amount of grain. And we had to approve them. Oh, there were numerous practices like that . . . that came under our jurisdiction. It was real interesting and something different.

*It's amazing to me how many things you were doing and I don't quite know how you did them all and I know you did them all well. But tell us now about the Nevada Cattle Association that I know you became a leader in, starting from your first involvement until now.*

Well, I joined the Nevada Cattle Association in the late forties or early fifties. I don't recall exactly when. But I was always more or less active in it. And Les Stewart had been president of the Nevada Cattle Association. He lives at Paradise Valley out of Winnemucca. He approached me and said, "How would you like to become president of the Cattle Association?" Well, it was kind of a bombshell because I had never even given it a thought. Well, in the first place, you have to be vice-president for two years. And then you move up to being president. Well, I said, "Let me think about it." So I saw him a couple of hours later and I said, "Yes. I'll accept it." And I said, "I know it's going to be a lot to handle, but I think I can handle it all right."

*What year was this.*

Well, let's see. I become vice-president in, I think, it was 1970. And I was vice-president for the two years. And then in 1972, I was elected president of the Nevada Cattlemen Association. At that time the association didn't have much funds and the president had to pay his own way every place . . . every place you went. If you fly back to Washington,



you footed the bill. It was taking about four days out of every week taking care of being president of the Cattle Association.

Wow.

In addition to that, it cost quite a bit of money, too. And so at the end of my two year term as president, I told them "We've got to change this some way or another." I said, "You can't keep asking these people to put up their own time and their own money being president." And so we enacted the . . . I don't know what you call it, but from there on the president would be reimbursed for his expenses as being president. And probably the highlight when I was in there . . . they had a meat boycott.

*Who's they?*

A lot of the general public that had been eating meat. The president of the Nevada Cow Belles was Marie Stewart. Marie and myself got a bus chartered and we took a bunch of the protesters on a tour to a slaughter plant which is over in Yerington. We had arranged this ahead of time and the people who owned this slaughterhouse took them through and showed them all about the meat from the time it was killed until it would come out in steaks and how it was all cut up and everything. And you know, these people had been very vocal. And of course, we explained to them on the tour our cattle operations and so forth which most of them didn't know anything about. And after the tour, they dropped the boycott, so that was one of the highlights, I think, of being on there.

*And you mentioned the Nevada Cow Belles. Tell me, what is that?*

It's an organization made up to a great extent of wives of the Nevada cattlemen. It's no longer called the Cow Belles. It's the Nevada Cattlewomen now.

*Oh, OK. [laughs]*

It was changed from Cow Belles to Cattlewomen. But they have been a great help to the cattle industry and the cattlemen. Oh, something will come up in Washington or over in Carson City during the legislature and we need help. And they'll write letters and call on the telephone and things like that. And they have been a great help to our industry.

*Now is that a county-wide or a state-wide . . . ?*

The Cow Belles are made up county-wide and state-wide. In other words, there's . . . the Cow Belles in districts, you might say. There's a district in Elko, Winnemucca, Churchill County, one over at Gardnerville, and one in Ely. And anyway, there is the state Cow Belles which all of these districts belong to. And then from the state Cow Belles, it goes to the national Cow Belles which is made up from cattlemen from every state.

*That's interesting. I didn't know much about that.*

And they have a convention at the same time that the national cattlemen have their convention.

*Oh, that's smart. That sounds very interesting.*

Going back to when I was on the Nevada Agriculture Stabilization Committee, probably one of the highlights of being on that committee, they asked us to come back



to Washington for a meeting. And in fact, they asked all of the state ASC committees to come back to a meeting. And we had a meeting that one day and they spoke about programs. And they said, "Well, we're going to have a surprise for you the next day." And we had no idea of what the surprise was. But the surprise was that they took us in buses to the White House and we met President Kennedy out on the lawn in back of the White House. And he come around and shook hands and talked to us, and we spent a couple of hours there with him. And following that, when President Johnson was president, we were also invited back there. While we were back there during President Johnson's tenure the dinner was at the state house. It was the first time, we were told, that they ever had people in our category do anything like that. The whole cabinet was there with their wives and they visited with us. And it was really quite an occasion.

*Tell us about the Nevada Tax Commission that you have . . . or are serving on.*

Well, I had served on it. I was appointed on the Nevada Tax Commission when Governor O'Callaghan took office. Governor O'Callaghan appointed me on the commission to represent agriculture.

*What year?*

I don't know. It was the year that Governor O'Callaghan [laughter] was elected governor of Nevada. And I served for the eight years that Governor O'Callaghan was on there. During that time the legislators changed . . . instead of just agriculture, I represented both agriculture and livestock. At that time, they reduced the number of people that were on the commission, also. And then we

also served as a state board of equalization during that time up until they changed the makeup of the board. I served all through Governor O'Callaghan's term and Governor List reappointed me and I served through his term, and I was serving on Governor Bryan's term when I resigned. And the reason I resigned is because it was getting kind of difficult for me to get around. So I thought I had better quit while I still could.

*How long ago was that that you quit? I mean recently or quite a while ago . . .*

Oh, it's been about ten years ago now.

*Oh, quite a while ago.*

Yes.

*So you served at least eight or ten years?*

I served thirteen years.

*Thirteen years. Tell me some of the decisions on tax that were handled during that time. What do you do when you're on the Nevada Tax Commission?*

Well, the Nevada Tax Commission sets the rates. Well, it's changed during the period of time I was even on the commission. But we have to take the assessments on all the utilities, decide the assessment value on utilities, which would take in power companies, telephone companies, railroads, airlines. In other words, United Airlines flies across Nevada, we get that portion of where the plane is in Nevada. And then we set evaluations on livestock. Of course, livestock is no longer taxed, but at that time we were setting evaluation for livestock . . . all farming, all agriculture. We

heard the complaints of the various entities. We had to approve the tax rate for all the counties and the cities within the state of Nevada.

Wow.

Of course, my part of it . . . I acted on everything, but I was supposed to be the expertise for agriculture and livestock while I served on the board, April 1971 until October of 1984.

*I know that you've also been active in other organizations and have won awards. Do you want to tell us about those?*

Yes. I was elected by the Society for Range Management as rangeman of the year. And that was for the state of Nevada. I twice have been elected cattleman of the year by the Nevada Cattlemen's Association which is, I think, a very high honor because I do not know of anyone that has been nominated for cattleman of the year but one time before.

*Now who nominates and what is this organization?*

The Nevada Cattlemen's Association.

*Oh, I see. Ok. So this is also a state-wide organization.*

Yes. Right. Right.

*And you're going to have to give me those dates later.*

Well, the first time was 1975. I was nominated as cattleman of the year. And I was again last year, 1993.

*Oh. Congratulations.*

Then I happened to be a member of the Lander, Wyoming, One Shot Antelope Hunt Club which is quite an honor. It has been in existence since before World War II. And of course, they didn't have any hunts during the war. But it is made up of mostly dignitaries which I can't say I am, but in Nevada I am only the fourth person who has been asked to join this club. The others . . . one is ex-senator Cannon and one is ex-senator Laxalt.

*What does it mean . . . Lander, Wyoming, One Shot Antelope Hunt club? Tell us.*

You have but one shell to kill your antelope with and if you miss, you are done and at the banquet that night you get a prize of a laughing antelope given to you. And you have to dance with an Indian squaw that night. [laughter] So, it's a lot of fun and it involves a lot of people. You meet a lot of dignitaries that you certainly wouldn't in everyday life.

*When that event comes, is that where everyone who is anybody goes there for that occasion and there's so many dignitaries?*

Well, no I wouldn't say so. It isn't advertised very much. It's quite a thing. And they have a big dinner after the shoot that night. And host everybody. And in my case, I shot at this antelope. It was just six-thirty in the morning. It was just breaking day and I hit the antelope and we saw him go down. And we thought he was dead. Each hunter has a guide that's with him. So we drove over there. The darn antelope was gone. So anyway, I was one of those that had the laughing antelope and had to dance with the Indian gal that night. Then you had to give your reason before all these people why

you missed the antelope and so forth. And oh, there were probably five hundred people there at this banquet. So I got a telephone from the motel. And I had the telephone sitting under the desk and under the podium. And so when I walked up there, I reached under the podium and picked up the telephone and I dialed. And I said, "How are you tonight, Mr. Weatherby? . . . Roy Weatherby? Oh, you are? You're feeling fine? Well, that's good. You know, I'm here in Wyoming tonight and I was on that One Shot Antelope Hunt. Well, the darn thing, I shot this antelope and that bullet disintegrated that antelope. And I want to know what kind of bullets you're selling." And people got the biggest uproar out of that. [laughter]

*Did you think of that yourself?*

Yes.

*Oh, you're pretty clever. Do you know what year this was?*

1985 was when it was.

*Did you go with anyone? Did you go with a group?*

My wife went with me. No. No. You're not invited as groups, you're invited individually.

*Oh, so you're invited to go.*

Oh, yes. It's invitation only.

*OK. I'm glad you said that. In other words, not just anyone can go.*

Oh, no.

*How many are invited each year about?*

They have normally around eighteen people. And there was three to team.

1985 was when it was. And there was three to a team. And they have six teams each year who shoot. And the team I was on was representing water for wildlife.

*Oh, that's really wonderful.*

And then I'm also a member of the Grand Slam Club. Member number fifty-seven. To go in with the Grand Slam Club, you have to have completed a Grand Slam which comprises of a Dall ram, a stone ram, a desert bighorn, and a bighorn ram. And I have three Grand Slams.

*Three Grand Slams!*

There are probably about five hundred and fifty members that belong to the Grand Slam Club as of now that have completed one Grand Slam or more. I doubt if there's over a dozen people in the United States who have three Grand Slams.

*We'll also have to get those dates. You're quite a hunter.*

I also at one time, when I lived in Fallon, belonged to the Fallon volunteer fire department.

*How many times did you have to go to fires? How many years did you serve on that?*

Oh, I think I was only on there about two years until I moved back out to the ranch and then I resigned from it.

*You'd have to. You couldn't hear their siren.*

No, I say not. And that was quite an experience, too.

*Any special fires that you can remember?*

*Anything exceptional?*

No, not right offhand. I don't recall anything that was exceptional. I do remember that the first one that got to the firehouse always got to drive the fire truck. And the siren went off one morning about four o'clock in the morning and I don't know how I got dressed and got to the fire department so quick, but I got in there and had the fire truck all ready to go . . . it was all started up before anybody ever showed up. And I thought maybe I had been dreaming [laughter] because nobody come and it seems like I sat there for an hour and I probably didn't sit there over a minute or two, but . . .

*And the place burned down by then. [laughter]*

Yes. Then I've been sixty years as a Mason.

*Wow. Anything to tell about your years in the Masons?*

No, I never held any offices while I was in the Masons, but I was given a sixty-year pin here two years ago.

*Were you the only one that got a sixty-year pin?*

No, Lem Allen got one.

*Oh, I'm going to interview him later this week.*

And Frank Woodliff.

*Oh, I interviewed Frank.*

And I was a trustee in the Stillwater School District for a term when we still had the school down here in Stillwater. Outside of that, that more or less covers it.

*Well, one thing I know . . . you haven't just been sitting around with all that you've done in your many years. Now, I want to get to the present. And I know that just these last few days, even today, you've been very busy getting ready for a certain meeting in Reno tomorrow. So do you want to tell us about that and tell us some of the issues currently that are being discussed in Churchill County.*

Yes. As you all know when Senator Clinton went into office, he put Bruce Babbitt in as Secretary of the Interior. For some reason or another, he seems to have it in for the people in the West although he comes from Arizona and was governor of Arizona at one time. He has stated that he's going to make a reform to the livestock range users. He's also trying to reform the mining industries. And I don't know who will be next. But on June 8 we're having a meeting in Reno . . . a hearing . . . which covers what was put in the federal register on the management of the federal ranges and also the proposed increase in grazing fees. The proposed grazing fee will increase the fees that we pay. It will double it. In other words, it will be a 100 percent increase which is pretty hard to absorb.

*What is it now and what is he recommending that it be? So we can have a better feel for it.*

The grazing fee is now \$1.96 per AUM which is Animal Unit per Month. In other words, a cow grazes for a month, it's \$1.96. And it will be doubled to \$3.96 over the next two years. To listen to that, it doesn't sound

like it's very much. In other words, roughly four dollars for your feed that you're getting. But that doesn't take into consideration . . . we own all the water. It's been appropriated under state law. We have all the maintenance on all of our waters. We have miles of fence between us and neighbors and drift fences that we have to maintain. In our case, we have about thirty miles of fence we have to maintain. We have about twenty-five miles of pipeline we have to maintain. We have about seventy-five springs that we maintain. Ten wells. And then, of course, we have to have a buckaroo with the cattle year-round. And using the truck . . . our stock truck. Going on these bad dirt roads doesn't last very long. In fact, we have to replace our truck every four years. And it'll probably have a hundred thousand miles on or a little over in a four year period. Replacement value is \$25,000. And also, our calves, when we wean them from off the desert ranges weigh on average about 375 pounds. And if you have that same calf being weaned out of a pasture on private land, that same calf will weigh anywhere from 550-600 pounds. And your calving percentages in the mountains where we get an eighty percent calf crop . . . eighty to eighty-two percent, we're doing well, while on a cattle ranch within a permanent pasture on private ground, you'll probably have a ninety-eight percent calf crop. And then with the terrain we have in the mountains, we have to use about twice as many bulls as you would if you had them in pastures on private land. So it costs us a great deal more to run on the public land than it does on private land.

*What do they charge on private land? Just so that we can have a . . .*

Well, a cow and a calf, the way that they have figured this out . . . the government has

figured it. It'll run you about twelve dollars. That's an average for all over.

*What do you figure here?*

Right here a cow and calf would probably cost you around fifteen. But it is costing us right at fifteen dollars to run it on that federal land. But we are weaning a calf that is a 100 to 150 pounds lighter than the one off the private land.

*Why is that? Not as good food?*

Well, not as good feed. Not as good feed.

*Not as good feed. OK.*

So when you figure that calf at eighty or ninety cents a pound, you see how much more it costs us. If we have to use twice as many bulls, a bull average costs us \$1,500 for a bull and we have to use two bulls. So it costs us \$3,000 for the bulls against \$1,500 for the one on private pasture. And when you add these things all together, it's really cost us a lot of money. But the government will not accept the fact that we are doing all this maintenance and not giving us credit for it. All they look at is the fee. That more or less summarizes the whole thing.

*So what is this meeting now that's going to be today . . . who will be attending that. Was there a public notice or . . . ?*

Yes. Anyone can attend the meeting. The environmentalists will be there because they're pushing to get all the livestock off the federal lands. That's what they have been trying to do for quite a few years. And the sportsmen will probably be there because it's

going to affect them. If they push the livestock people off the public lands, a lot of these waters will disappear as no one will take care of them and they'll all dry up and it'll have an effect on the wildlife. And of course, all of the livestock people who run on public lands, I'm sure are going to be there to make comments on the Rangeland Reform that has been set out in the federal register.

*Where is this going to be held?*

It will be held at the Peppermill Hotel in Reno starting Wednesday at eight o'clock in the morning and it will continue all day until everyone gets an opportunity to make any remarks about it.

*Well, that's fair. In other words, everyone can make remarks.*

Yes. That's right.

*Everyone. That's fair. And so you have to go the night before?*

Well, we won't. We'll get up early and go up.

*You'll get up real early and go there?*

Yes. Yes.

*So what other issues are there? I know that we talked a little about the water issues and then the issue of the grazing lands. What other issues are you facing?*

Well, the Endangered Species Act. Of course, right here, so far we've been fortunate to a certain extent. Within the valley it has affected us greatly because Pyramid Lake has the *Cui-ui* fish which

is endangered and they're wanting our water to feed the fish. And all over the United States, the Endangered Species Act has really gotten out of hand. You take the spotted owl. Look what it's done to the timber industry. And, oh, fishes of all different kinds. Babbitt's even talking about taking all of the dams out of the river up in Washington and Oregon so that the salmon can have a free run to go back up the rivers. And, oh, it's just one thing after another. It's just . . . the environmental issue is fine. We have been environmentalists, people in the livestock industry. If we didn't take good care of our ranges, we wouldn't have anything. And we've been running for 120 years on the same land. And if we didn't take care of it and . . .

*Are there some . . . as in many things, some who spoil it for others who don't take care of it? I mean does that happen?*

Well, yes, there are spoilers in everything. And there probably . . . in the livestock industry, we probably got less than one percent.

*Oh, that's all.*

And that's the only ones they want to look at. ABC was out here in Reno when one of Babbitt's . . .

*You mean the television station?*

Yes. From New York. Were out here when it was in Reno here a couple of months ago. And they wanted to come out and see one of these ranges that was being used. And so they were sent out here.

*To your place?*



Yes. And Bruce and I took them out to the mountains and showed them where cattle were grazing and everything. And they spent about three hours taking pictures and so forth and said they would be aired on some evening show at six o'clock. But they never were showed because they didn't see what they wanted to see. They wanted to see something that beat out and they didn't see it.

*So they didn't put it on.*

Never put it on. And that's happened to us before. In fact, we had the *Geographic* magazine come here and wanted to go out to the mountains. And we spent a full day with them out there. And they gave us the worst rundown you could ever see. It was unbelievable. They never said a thing in there of what they were told or what they saw. They just tried to destroy the industry.

*Oh, that's too bad.*

Yes.

*Before we end this wonderful interview, is there anything more? I know I do want to ask you this before we end because I know there are all these problems which makes it look kind of pessimistic. I think you have a beautiful, beautiful ranch here and a lovely location. What do you see in the next decade in Churchill County? People are moving in who are looking for a place away from crowds and crime and it's less taxes, of course, here. What do you see in the future, what Churchill County will be like in the next decade?*

Well, it certainly won't be agriculture. Under the proposed settlement that Senator

Reid put through, wildlife is supposed to acquire probably close to two-thirds of our water. And there'll be very little agriculture left in the valley. And I suppose the Navy base and if they put the prison in which they're talking about.

*Were they talking about a prison?*

A federal prison.

*Where?*

Up north of Fallon about six miles. Supposed to be the biggest federal prison that's ever been built in the United States.

*So close to Fallon instead of out in the desert?*

I don't know if it'll go through or not, but as far as agriculture in Nevada is concerned, particularly Churchill County, it's just about through in my opinion.

*That's sad because that's why the Newland's project was started because this was such a ripe area for agriculture.*

Yes. And you know what irritates me is that it's an old project and still the government doesn't try and help us. You know, if they'd help us cement these cement ditches, we could get by with a lot less water than what we do. We have a lot of evaporation. And to meet the criteria that they set down, it's pretty near impossible with these old dirt ditches. And they don't want to help us. They're not interested in helping us. All they want is to take the water away from us. Another thing, too, is this clean water act legislation before Congress right now. If we irrigate one of these fields,

the water that comes off the end of the field has to be just as pure as the water that enters the field under this new proposal that they have. And that's pretty near an impossibility. You can't do it!

Thank you.

*Well, what do they use the water for that it has to be so pure. Can't it be reused on your land?*

Yes. But they think they should stay pure all the way so that if the ducks drink it, it won't contaminate them or it won't contaminate the fish or what not. I don't know. It's just regulation on top of regulation. And well, they're trying to regulate that we shouldn't use pesticides. We shouldn't use commercial fertilizers. How are the people in the United States going to live? What are they going to eat if we can't . . . today, each farming family produces enough food for a hundred or more people. And if we have to do away with all these things, we're not going to be able to produce that food. In fact, the American public's going to have to all go back to farming again. Can you imagine that? [laughter] Like it was a hundred years ago. And so many of these environmentalists want to put the country back to where it was 100-150 years ago. It's a very bad, very bad issue.

*Well, one thing that I know from not only what I read about your grandparents and your great-grandparents, but from this long interview with you, you all have certainly lived a very fulfilling, rich life in developing and contributing so much to this region. And on behalf of the Churchill County oral history project, we're very grateful to you for all that you've shared in this interview that will help many others in decades to come to see what it was like, what it could be like, and what your contribution has been. And so I want to thank you.*

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## ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

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MYRL NYGREN

*Sylvia Arden: This is Sylvia Arden, interviewer for the Churchill County Oral History Project interviewing Myrl Nygren at her home at 6800 Mission Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is April the fourteenth, 1994.*

*Myrl, I'm so glad you agreed to be interviewed for the Churchill County Oral History Project. Would you first give us your name, when and where you were born?*

Myrl Nygren: Myrl Nygren. I was born October the ninth, 1924, in Fallon, Nevada.

*Let's talk first about your grandparents, starting with your paternal grandfather.*

Well, my paternal grandfather was Peter Nygren. He was born in Sweden [March 18, 1855], and he came to the United States around 1870 probably. And my paternal grandmother was Olina Johnson Nygren who was also born in Sweden [January 19, 1856], and came to this country.

*Did they know each other in Sweden?*

I don't believe so. I think they met in Minnesota.

*Did you know your grandfather?*

Yes.

*Did he ever tell you what brought him to America and where he first went?*

Well, he didn't tell me that, but my understanding from my father is that they came over when the potato famine was on in Europe and things were very, very hard and difficult to live there because of the lack of food and I think because they wanted more opportunities.

*Did he come with his family or did he come as a grown man?*

He came as a grown man.



*Did he come with anyone?*

No.

Not to my knowledge.

*Who were the first ones in the family to come to Nevada and then to Churchill County . . . which ones in the family?*

*And where did he first settle.*

Minnesota.

My father was the first to come to Nevada. He came to Fallon and homesteaded in 1907. My mother didn't come out until 1913. Grandpa and Grandma Nygren and their daughter, Lily, which was my father's sister, they came, I think, around 1912.

*And what about your grandmother. Did she come with her family?*

*So your father was the pioneer.*

No, I don't believe so. Maybe she may have known him over there, but I've never known that. And she probably came over with a bunch of other immigrants that were looking for a better life.

Right.

*And did they also go to Minnesota?*

*Tell me your father's name.*

Yes.

Walter Leander Nygren.

*That was kind of a center for the people from Sweden?*

*And do you know where and when he was born?*

Yes. Minnesota looks just like Sweden.  
[laughter]

He was born in Ottertail County, Minnesota, January 4, 1885.

*OK. So that was the reason. Tell me a little bit about your maternal grandparents starting with your maternal grandfather.*

*Tell me a little about his life before he headed for Nevada. Were they farmers in Minnesota?*

My maternal grandfather was Hugh Hunter and he came from Illinois. He was born in Illinois [December 25, 1846], and then later on moved to Minnesota. And my maternal grandmother was Rhoda Sherman Hunter. And she came from New York. I think she and Grandpa Hunter were married before they went to Minnesota. But then they did move to Minnesota.

Yes, they were farmers and Dad had a problem with asthma, so he was looking for a climate that was better for his health. When he was a youth he worked in the grain fields of North Dakota, I think primarily to earn money. And then when he could, he went to California and worked on the Southern Pacific Railroad as a painter. He was in California when the 1906 earthquake hit San Francisco. And that kind of decided him that he didn't want to live in California.  
[laughter]

*Did they also have a Swedish background?*

*How old was he when he left home? Do you have any idea?*

I have no idea.

*You have no idea. So then was he still alone when he came to Nevada and do you know how he heard about it?*

He read about the new reclamation project being started in Nevada. It was advertised in the papers all over the United States. And so he wrote a letter asking the officials at the Bureau of Reclamation what it was like, if the climate was good for bees . . . he had a hobby of beekeeping and I guess he thought he might eventually be a beekeeper. So one of his inquiries was how was the weather and what was the extreme cold and what was the extreme heat and I think he also asked about what homesteading involved.

*Is his one of the letters that's still available that he wrote? Do you have a copy?*

Yes.

*I'd like later to see that, to add that.*

OK.

*And did he then come alone?*

To my knowledge he came alone. He came on a train up to Hazen and then probably caught a buckboard or a ride with somebody into Fallon. I think the reclamation people would take potential homesteaders out to the different areas to show them the land. And then they could go pick a piece of land that they thought they might farm. And my father and our neighbor, Mr. Ayers, were riding in

the same wagon or buckboard and they came along where this ranch is and they also looked at the ranch where the Ayers . . . Mr. Ayers finally homesteaded. Mr. Ayers was married and had a child that was about school age and Dad wasn't married. So they decided on their land by Mr. Ayers would take the piece of land closest to the school and my father took the next adjoining land.

*And what year was that?*

Oh, I guess it was 1907. That's when he came to homestead.

*Was he one of the early ones?*

Well, as far as the homesteaders go, I think he was. Many people were here farming before that, but they were right along the river where they didn't have to rely on the irrigation water from the dam which wasn't even built then.

*So your father, it sounds like, was one of those adventurous, independent, strong kind of a man.*

I think he was.

*. . . to come to such an isolated place alone. So then where did he meet your mother?*

I think he met Mom back in Minnesota when he went back for a visit one time. This is after he had homesteaded. And he went back to see his folks and his sister. His sister was teaching and she was boarding at Grandma Hunter's home. My mother was there of course. So they were visiting and he told Mom that she ought to come west to Nevada, they needed schoolteachers.

*Oh, she was a schoolteacher.*

Yes. [laughs]

*And she came?*

Yes.

*Did they marry here or in Minnesota?*

No, they married in Fallon at the Methodist church.

*So when she first came, where did she go?*

I imagine when she came, Grandma and Grandpa Nygren had moved out by then and she may have stayed with them because she knew Aunt Lily.

*Now who's Aunt Lily?*

Aunt Lily is my father's sister. Lily Machin is her name.

*OK. And was that right in Fallon?*

Yes.

*Where did they live there?*

On 78th North Broadway. They may they lived some time in Sheckler District because my Aunt Lily homesteaded an acreage in Sheckler District.

*Oh, that's interesting. And what year did she homestead?*

I really can't answer that.

*Now, let's get you born. [laughter] They married and when did the family start arriving?*

Well, my oldest brother, Earl Nygren, was born in 1918, January 23. At one time there were four Nygrens with birthdays in January. [laughter]

*Oh my goodness!*

And Ray was born April 7, 1923. And then Maie and I were born October the ninth, 1924.

*Do you know the year your parents married?*

1915.

*So then as you were growing up as a little girl, I want your very earliest memories and also when you were old enough to listen to what your parents and grandparents told you about when they arrived. What are your very earliest memories of the homestead. Were you born right in the house?*

No, we were born at Moore Hospital in Fallon. We were a surprise.

[laughs] *They didn't know it was twins.*

They didn't know it was twins. [laughter]

*They didn't have the kind of scanning equipment that they have now. And so that completed two boys and two girls.*

Right.

*It was a big family. Well, from your very, very earliest memories, what did it look like here on, let's start on the outside on the ranch, when you were a little girl.*

Well, I don't think we had the trees that we have now. We did have some trees that Dad had planted and they were on the west side

of the house and I'm sure they were planted for shade.

*What kind of trees?*

Cottonwood and some locust. The cottonwood grow fast and the locust grow slower, but they last longer . . . they live longer. [chuckles] I can remember the corrals that we used to have just east of the house and then later on they were moved back to the south primarily, I think, because it was just a nuisance to have the cattle so close to the house.

*Two questions on those corrals. Are they still around?*

Not the original corrals.

*I want to know two things. Describe it a little bit and how many animals . . . it probably changed over time, but in the earliest period, what animals and how many?*

I'm not sure I can tell you how many, but of course horses because all of the farming in those days was done with horses. And then they had a few milk cows. I'm sure at the start they just had enough milk cows for the family. Later on, we had about fifteen milk cows and Dad would sell the cream to the creamery.

*And was there any hay yet or any crops?*

I can remember, haying was *the* big thing.

*How big of a ranch was it when you were a little girl growing up, let's say through elementary school? Describe what was going on at the ranch, how many workers . . .*

Well, at that time the ranch was 160 acres.

*Was that the amount of the actual homestead?*

Eighty acres was what you were allowed to homestead, but the land just to the west, my mother homesteaded. So the two of them had 160 acres. During the wintertime we didn't usually have any extra help in . . . with ranch hands. In the summer we had two or three ranch hands all summer long to help with the haying.

*Is it mainly the haying that the ranch hands were needed to help with this?*

Well, haying was a long, drawn out process then. They had to cut it and then rake it into windrows and then rake it into shocks, and then . . . . Once the hay dried enough so you could stack it, they had to pitch the shocks onto a haywagon and then the haywagon had to drive over to where that hay was being stacked. And then they would have to have a stacker to make the stack and somebody to run the dairy cart. And now they didn't just hay with one haywagon, they had about three or four going . . . or maybe even five depending upon how much help they could get.

*So it was all by hand? Horses and by hand.*

All by hand and horses.

*Labor intensive.*

Very.

*And so was that hay just for your animals or were you selling hay?*

Dad was selling hay besides feeding our animals.

*Who was he selling the hay to?*

Probably at that time the I.H. Kent Company. They bought most of the hay around the valley. And they had a gentleman by the name of Dan Evans that would go out and make offers to the ranchers for what they'd pay per ton of hay.

*What would they do with the hay?*

I think they would sell it. Some of it they would grind up for fine hay feed. And I think they would ship some of that to other places. And then there were farmers around that didn't have enough hay, so they would buy their hay from Mr. Kent.

*So he was the retailer. So they were buying the hay. What else was going on on the ranch?*

Well, we always had all kinds of animals. We had pigs and chickens and probably by the late twenties we had turkeys and sheep. Dad quite a herd of sheep at one time. When the herd was small, he had them here on the ranch. But as they got bigger and bigger, then he and another man that owned a bunch of sheep joined together and hired a sheepherder to herd the sheep in the foothills out here in the Stillwater range.

*Was that the same range where Ira Kent's sheep were?*

Yes.

*The same range there. Were the sheep raised for the wool or the meat?*

For the wool. We never had lamb in our house. Mom didn't like it. She said when she first got married, Dad always had a kettle of

lamb or mutton on the stove and it wasn't lamb, it was always the old, old ewes. [laughter] And she said she just got so tired of that smell that we never ever had lamb. [laughter]

*Now who did he sell the wool to?*

I think he would sell it to wool traders, I guess, that would come through the valley and give a certain price for wool. And then these people would pick it up and with a truck, I think, and take it to California, I believe.

*Who would shear the sheep?*

There were itinerant shearers that came through in the springtime and they would go from ranch to ranch and shear the sheep.

*Oh, that's a specialized business.*

I used to have fun watching them shear the sheep and boy, they did it fast.

*Did they do it here? Did they bring the sheep back here from the range or did they do it out on the range?*

No. In the wintertime, they brought the sheep back to the ranch. And the sheep were always shorn in the spring and before they were turned back out on the range. And so they would always come to the ranch here and shear the sheep.

*About how many sheep did your father have?*

Well, I think when he started, he probably had two or three hundred, but when he was growing the most sheep, he had about twenty-five hundred.

*Oh, that's a lot!*

Yes.

*Now, who was hired to be the shepherders?*

I can't answer that. Probably a Basque bachelor.

*Did they use Basque? And did they stay out . . . did they have a sheepwagon?*

Yes. They had a sheepwagon and a horse or a mule.

*And how many miles away from here would that be?*

Oh, I would think between fifteen and twenty-five miles.

*Oh, that far. Did someone have to go out to bring supplies and food and . . .*

Probably so, but I don't remember my father doing that. Maybe the partner he was in with, maybe he took the responsibility of taking food out to the man. I just don't remember that.

*Now was that partner just for the sheep or for other . . . ?*

Just for the sheep.

*Just for the sheep. And where did they buy the sheep or lambs?*

They probably bought them from other farmers that had lambs to sell. And then once you get a few lambs or a few ewes and a ram

or two, you know, they just start having their own babies and the herd grows from that.

*Did your father ever talk to you about what it looked like when he first arrived and homesteaded?*

He didn't talk a lot with me, but I can remember him making the comment that when he came there wasn't a tree around . . . you could see for miles. And there was another homesteader about, oh, three miles away from here. And they had an agreement that they would help each other when they were needed to either hay or level the land or whatever. And the way of contacting each other, they would stick a pole up in the air with a colored rag on it. And they could see, there weren't any trees or anything around. [laughter] And they could see the signals that would say "I need your help today." [laughter]

*The first time I've ever heard of that. That's wonderful. Now was your father all alone when he first homesteaded?*

Yes.

*And what else did you hear him talk about? Did he build his own little shack or . . . ?*

Yes, I think he built his own little shack. And one other thing I remember, he used to . . . even when we were small, he always had a gun by the back door. And every morning when he would get up, there would be usually coyotes in the yard. And he had the gun right there and he would shoot the coyotes.

*Was that so they wouldn't kill his animals?*



Mm-hmm.

*As soon as he homesteaded, did he get animals in immediately?*

I think so. He got at least the cow and a couple of horses, I'm sure, because he had to have transportation.

*And then he was working before he came, so he probably saved a little bit of money to start with?*

Yes. I remember the fellow from the reclamation office that wrote Dad said that a person would need at least a thousand dollars to get started here.

*Oh! Now there was a picture in Turn This Water into Gold of the Nygren Homestead in 1907. Who were the two men in that picture?*

That was my father and my grandfather, Peter Nygren.

*And so that shows the really rough situation when he first came.*

Yes. [laughs]

*What else did your dad or grandpop talk about in that early, early period before you were able to observe. Did they talk about the water coming in or the ditches?*

No, no. I can remember when Dad had to irrigate. It was, you know, it was a two or three day affair and not just during the day, but all night, too.

*Is this before the irrigation project or after?*

After.

*Describe what you remember of that.*

The project or the irrigation?

*No, what your Dad had to do to irrigate in detail.*

First of all, when he wanted to irrigate, he had to contact the ditch rider and tell him that he would like to have the water and they referred to a head of water . . . now I can't tell you what those measurements are. But they would order one head, two heads, or three heads of water. If somebody else was using the water, the ditch rider would say, "Well, you'll have to wait until Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones is through and then I'll send it down to you." And that means he would take the irrigation gates and raise them so the water would come our way and he would shut off the irrigation gates to the previous irrigator so that the water would come this way. Well, then Dad had . . . depending upon where he was irrigating, he would move from what they referred to as a check which was a certain sized piece of land with a levy and then there was another check and another levy and so that he'd water one or two checks at a time.

*Now when you say water one or two checks, how did he get the water from the ditch to the plants or to the land?*

Well, from the main canal, the water came to what they call a lateral ditch. Those gates had to be closed unless you were doing the irrigating. And then the water would go down the ditch at the head of the field and there were different, what they called gates to control the water and they would open two of those gates at a time and the water would just flow down the field.

*I see. Now, who built all of those ditches and when?*

Well, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District built the main ditches . . . the canals and the laterals and . . .

*When?*

Well, between the time of the start of the project which was 1903 and it probably went on until after the dam was built.

*And when your father came, were there already some ditches?*

Oh, yes.

*On his land?*

Not on his land. He had to make the ditches on his land.

*I see. In other words, there would be the main ditches, but each one would dig the ditches from the main one.*

Yes. Each farmer had to make his own ditches.

*And you made it the way it would be best for whatever you were doing on your ranch.*

Right.

*So did he dig those himself or get workers or . . . ?*

Well, he probably dug some himself and he probably . . . maybe his neighbor that he used to signal would help him come and dig those ditches. And they used what they called a Fresno scraper. The way you operate it, it

would scoop up the dirt just like a regular scoop shovel does today. And of course, they had to have horses. The ditches didn't have to be really, really deep, but they had to be deep enough to carry the water so there would be enough water to cover the field once you turn the water onto the field, and they had to be deep enough so the water didn't run over the bank because you didn't want it running just anywhere.

*Now how did they ration the water and when your father got the homestead, did it come with certain water rights? How did that work?*

They had to pay for the water rights and they were able to buy, depending upon the type of soil, 3.5 acres of water right in good soil. And then farmers up on the Swingle Bench could get 4.5 acre feet of water because it was so sandy.

*So it was rationed? In other words, could you have all you wanted or was there a certain amount each one could have? How did that work?*

In the early days, I think they pretty well could have what they wanted, but as time went on, then they were rationed by the number of acres they had and the acre feet of water per acre. So if you had fifty acres in a field and you had 3.5 acre feet, then you'd have 150 plus acre feet of water that you could irrigate with.

*Now, let's say you ran over or would they not give you permission to irrigate? Did you ever have that come out?*

Not to my knowledge.

*Usually there was enough water and they figured it out.*

Yes.

*And then was there a monthly charge for the water?*

I don't know about that in the early days. Since I can remember, they charged for the water and the operation of TCID was collected by the county clerk treasurer when they collected the taxes.

*Oh, OK. So it would be like we pay water tax and . . . ?*

Yes.

*I see. And that depended upon how much you used?*

Right.

*Now, coming back to the ranch as a young person, did you have any vegetable gardens?*

Oh, yes. We had a big vegetable garden. And most every vegetable we had growing in it. We had corn, and we even had potatoes, and carrots, and beets, and we had strawberries.

*And that all was because of irrigation.*

Yes.

*I took some pictures coming up here where it was all sagebrush. Did the land look like that before it was irrigated?*

That was what it was like. That's what it was when Dad came. He said it was just all sagebrush. You know, some places were hilly and some were low, and that all had to be leveled off.

*Was there equipment for that?*

Yes.

*Did they rent it?*

Well, they probably borrowed it at the time. Well, I'm sure when he first came he didn't have any equipment and probably had to borrow it. And then when he got enough money, he would buy it. Two or three pieces of the main pieces of equipment that I can remember was the Fresno that I described that you could dig a ditch with because you could also carry dirt from a high place and dump it in a low place. And then there was what they called a tailboard scraper. The scraper was made of wood and it would do a fine job of levelling the land whereas the Fresno would more or less just dump the dirt. The scraper would quote move the dirt around and make it level. And they called it a tailboard scraper because behind the scraper there would be a board that the farmer would stand on to follow his horses rather than walk.

*Are there pictures of that?*

I think we have a picture in our photograph album of Dad on a scraper.

*Oh, wonderful. And did he ever talk about the hardships?*

Not that I can remember. I think he probably did, but when you're a kid you don't pay much attention to that.

*Did he start with his bees early?*

I think he started with a few bees right away and then later, probably in the late twenties or mid-twenties, he really started

getting serious about beekeeping and raising honey to sell.

*Was he the main one in this whole region that was raising bees?*

No, there were three or four other farmers that also had a sizeable bunch of beehives, I guess you would call them. And there was one man, his name was Mr. Andrews, that's all he did was work with bees and "grow honey."

*So they couldn't have had bees if it wasn't for the Newlands project and the crops and flowers where the bees could get their nectar.*

And they probably wouldn't have had as good crops without the bees to pollinate.

*So that's a wonderful cycle there. And when your father had to start hiring workers about how many did you say he hired?*

Well, during the haying season, he probably had between five and ten men.

*Where did he get them?*

Oh, if they weren't too busy doing their own farming, he'd get the Indians from the reservation. And then once in a while he'd get a fellow in town that went to the labor department and wanted a job.

*People signed up when they wanted work?*

Yes. But it was hard to, you know, really take those people because you never knew how good they were with horses and how good they would be to work with the horses. So Dad preferred having the Indians if they were available.

*We'll go into depth later about the reservation and the Indians.*

*Looking out your windows, I see a lot of beautiful trees, tell me about when these were planted, and how often your father planted trees, and the reasons.*

Well, the trees you see from the window my father planted years and years ago. They were growing as long as I can remember. And this big tree here is a Minnesota ash that he brought back from Minnesota from a visit we made in 1938.

*Oh, for goodness sakes!*

And he planted that tree.

*We'll take a picture of it so we know what we're talking about.*

Yes. Well, you can imagine coming from Minnesota which is heavily wooded to a desert with no trees. And trees were planted for two reasons really: windbreaks to keep the soil down and for shade. And lots of the trees on the fence lines that you see all over the valley were originally cottonwood fence posts and then they just sprouted and became trees.

*Really? Oh, my! So that when they came and planted these, the wood was available, and they were new and didn't know that or were they glad when they sprouted into trees?*

Well, I'm not sure, you know. Trees along the fence line help tear up your fence. And if the branches extend over into the field, they end up sometimes breaking and falling down into the field which then can gum up your machinery. So I don't think it was really intended, but that's what happened. [laughter]

*And then were most of them planted about the same time?*

Most of them were planted, well, before . . . like I say, before I can remember. It was probably even before I was born.

*Well, now we're going to get you started to school, so I'm going to ask you a couple of questions first. I want to know how old you were, but mainly I want to know where was the school and I want to know as much as you can tell me about your elementary school days.*

Well, we went to Harmon school and it's about three and a half miles from our home here. We were six years old when we started first grade and . . .

*No kindergarten, then.*

No, kindergarten. They didn't know about kindergarten. [laughter] But the year we started was the largest group of first graders in the school that year I think ever. Well, I won't say ever. The school did grow.

*What caused that?*

Well, a lot of people were coming into the area and homesteading. And of course, they were all young when they first homesteaded and the kids all started coming about the same time.

*Large families?*

Yes. And so the Harmon school is built like a T. The two arms of the T . . . one arm on each side that make the T is a classroom and then the T part or the post part, I don't

know how you call it, was an auditorium. And they used to have dances there and Christmas parties and Christmas programs. Well, when we started, there were so many kids in the first grade that we had to have *our* classroom in the auditorium!

*Amazing. Now, what year was this? 1930?*

Yes.

*And so you didn't start in a one room schoolhouse.*

No. [laughter]

*You had a big school.*

We had, actually, a two-room schoolhouse, but that year it was a three-room schoolhouse.

*OK. So two questions, in your classroom how many students about and in the total school . . . what grade did it go through?*

Eighth grade.

*About how many kids in your class in the school. Did you have separate classes?*

No.

*All grades in one?*

All except for that one year when the first grade had to be in the auditorium, the one schoolroom had first through fourth and then the other schoolroom had fifth through the eighth.

*OK. So in the first through fourth . . . did it continue large after the first year? Did it keep growing or did some leave?*

Some left. You know, during the Depression, quite a few people didn't make it and they had to leave . . . go somewhere else.

Oh!

So then the numbers of students declined.

*What was the average number of students in that first through fourth?*

I would imagine about twenty to twenty-five.

*And were they pretty equally balanced, as to grade levels or . . . ?*

Yes, and I think pretty equally balanced between male and female, too.

*Did the Indian children go to your school?*

No, I'm not sure why except that there was an Indian school at Stewart [south of Carson City] where many of the Indian children were sent to go to school.

*Who ran that school?*

The government.

*Oh, OK. So when they put up the reservation, they put up a school? Was that part of the reservation?*

Well, Stewart Indian School is over in Carson.

*In Carson? They had to go for first grade?*

Well, yes. Well, to my knowledge, they did.

*So they had to board.*

They boarded.

*They took those little kids? Oh, my goodness!*

Yes, it was hard . . . I'm sure it was hard on those little kids.

*Oh, my! How long did they do that?*

Well, that school was there through my high school days and it was probably closed in the late forties, early fifties.

*Oh, so that was a government run school.*

Government run school.

*That boarded them.*

But during our high school days, the Indians from this reservation, Indian students went to our high school.

*So we'll go back to Harmon school and first through fourth grade. Tell me about your first teacher. Who was that?*

Ruby Robison.

*And did she teach you through the fourth grade?*

No, she just taught us the first grade that I can remember. And then we had a teacher by the name of Clara Plumb. And she taught us second through the fourth grade.

*Is Plumb Lane named after her family?*

No. [laughter] Then we moved into the upper grades to a gentleman by the name of Paul Liebhart and he was our upper grade



teacher. He was a good teacher. Both of them. Dr. Plumb was an excellent teacher and Mr. Liebhart was too. It was fun going to this country school because everybody had to play together. You know, there weren't enough boys to make a team.

*I see. So, co-ed. Not boys basketball and girls. Everyone played together.*

Everybody played together, which I think was wonderful.

*Yes, what kinds of games? Would this be recess?*

Yes, during recess.

*They had an outdoor area for that?*

Big area.

*What kind of games?*

Well, when there wasn't snow on the ground, we would play "Black Man" which I don't know if you know what "Black Man" is, but it consists of two sides and you'd draw a line quite a bit apart from each other. And then one person from the one team would cross over and try to entice a person from the other team to come out from behind their line. And then they would try to tag each other or a person from the first team would come from behind and tag the guy that came over from the other side. And it was just kind of a chase game.

*It was a lot of fun. [laughter] And the girls kept up with the boys?*

Oh, yes. And then we played "Andy-I-Over" and there again we'd get into teams and one would be on one side of the schoolhouse, usually the auditorium part, and the other

team would be on the other side and they'd throw a ball over the roof of the school.

*Oh, my! [laughs]*

And then the kids would try and catch the ball. And then we had lots of individual kinds of games. We had swings so you could swing on the swings. And we had what they called a giant stride. And it was a metal post and it had bars. On the top of the metal post, there was a rotating wheel. And attached to that wheel were chains long enough for the kids to reach and then two bars that they could hang on with. And the idea was to hang on to those bars and run and then take your feet off the ground and see how far you could ride just with the thing turning around. And that's why they called it a giant stride because you could take one step and then ride while the thing spun around and then you might be halfway around before you had to get down on the ground again. [laughs]

*Oh, my! Now, did you bring lunch? Did you eat here?*

Well, in the early days, we brought our lunch, but I guess it was during the Depression, they started having meals for the kids.

*A hot lunch?*

A hot lunch. And we had our hot lunch in the basement of the school which was primarily under the auditorium. And two or three ladies in the district cooked the meals.

*How did you get to school?*

Well, when we first started, we rode in a two-wheeled buggy.

*Who drove it?*

Well, first Earl drove it because he was the oldest. And we had a white mare called Nelly that was the one that pulled the buggy. When Earl went into high school, then Ray drove. Once in a while Maie and I would drive, too. But primarily it was Earl.

*Until he went into high school. Let's see, when you started school . . . he's seven years older, so he was thirteen. How did he get to school in Fallon?*

He boarded a school bus.

*Oh, by then they had a school bus. So let's get back, you talked about the hot lunches because of the Depression. So we'll get back to school again later, but I want to continue with that a little bit. Were the hot lunches because many of the children in the family didn't have much food at home or what was the reason the Depression brought the hot lunch program?*

I'm not really sure whether it was the Depression or President Roosevelt's answer to part of the Depression, but I think a part of the school lunches were based on the health of the children. A lot of children were underweight and I remember we would line up . . . in fact, I was underweight. We would line up to take a teaspoon of cod liver oil before we ate our lunch.

*Oh, yuck! [laughter]*

Yes! By the end of the school I got so I didn't mind it. But I think it was a health promotional kind of thing.

*Like a nutrition program? Was it through federal funds?*

I think so. I think the kids, they got stars if they gained a certain amount of weight. You know, the stars were to encourage the kids to eat.

*Did each district buy the food locally?*

I think so. At the time that program started, there weren't too many other rural schools still operating. I guess Stillwater school was and Hazen school was, but by that period of time, most of the rural schools had been consolidated into the Fallon schools.

*So was this program just for rural schools or all schools?*

No, I think it was for all schools.

*Did they also serve breakfast or just lunch?*

No, just lunch.

*Just a lunch. And what kind of lunches would they be?*

Well, we might have something like Chicken-A-La-King or soups and some kind of macaroni dish. It was all fairly inexpensive, but it was always tasty.

*And a lot of calories.*

And a lot of calories.

*I see. And did the kids like that? Did they like having lunch?*

I think they did. In those days, I think kids didn't have the liberty they have now to choose the food they want. You tended to eat what was on the table.

*They wouldn't say, "No, I want a hotdog." OK. [laughter] How did kids dress when you went to elementary school? How did the girls dress?*

Well, most of them dressed in cotton dresses with long stockings. And in the wintertime, the dress might be wool.

*Never pants? Never Levi's or pants?*

No, no.

*Not for girls.*

Not for girls at that time. And the boys usually wore overalls or what we call Levi's . . . blue jeans.

*Blue jeans. But with a bib or . . . ?*

Well, the overalls would have the bib, but the blue jeans would be just a pant part with a belt.

*Now tell me the kind of subjects from the time you started, taking you through the early part and then through eighth, I want to know what they were teaching you.*

Well, first of all, I guess art would be one of the first things because we would learn to color and we'd learn what the primary colors were. And of course, everybody had to take penmanship and that was usually the Palmer method. Everybody had to learn to write.

*Too bad they don't do that today.*

Yes, isn't it. We weren't allowed to print, we had to write. And of course, we had to learn our ABC's. And then probably by the second or third grade, we were doing

arithmetic with the flash cards where they'd have two times two and you'd have to give the answer. And then we had geography and history and reading, I guess you would call it. We usually had to stand up and read a lesson from a book. One thing we had nice in the lower grades was the teacher would start the afternoon session reading from a book like *Tom Sawyer* or *Huckleberry Finn*. Or *The Wizard of Oz*. And then part of our lesson was reading. We'd have to get up and read from a book and . . .

*Were they school books?*

Yes. Mostly school books, but we also could read from *The Wizard of Oz* or . . .

*Was there a school library?*

The Harmony Social Club which was a group of women in this district really supported the school and one of the things they did was buy books.

*Oh, how wonderful. Were the books set up in a little library?*

We had a kind of an odd room. It was part of the schoolroom, but it was kind of offset and that's where the books were. And they had a little table. And when we were real little, we could sit at the table and read our books.

*Could you check any out as you went in higher grades?*

As we went into higher grades, we could check them out and bring them home. But when we were in the lower grades, I don't remember that we did that. But fortunately for us, Mom always had books around for us.

*Oh, she bought books and she encouraged your homework. And as you were going through the elementary grades, what were your favorite subjects and least favorite subjects?*

I can't remember having a least favorite subject.

*You liked it all?*

I liked it all. I liked reading and I liked the arithmetic and I just enjoyed it all. I just liked going to school.

*That's wonderful. And now moving into the fifth to eighth grades, you're moving along there, were you still liking everything? Were you still good in everything? Or did you find some areas that you really were beginning to feel you, you know, were more attracted to? Or was that much later in high school.*

Even in high school, I liked all my subjects. And maybe there again, you had a limited number of classes you could take and you just had less of a choice than the kids do now. So I think we were more content to have the classes we had. One of the things we enjoyed which I don't know if all the schools had it, but we used to subscribe to a little newspaper called "Current Events" and it was aimed at the "News of the Day." It only came I think once a week.

*Who put it out?*

I think some national organization put it out and the school subscribed to it. And so I really kind of enjoyed the discussions we had on the subjects that were in current events. Most of them were political or governmental.

*So you were always interested in those kinds of things?*

Yes. And when the kids in the eighth grade were learning algebra and by the time we were in the seventh grade, since we were all in the same room, we were learning algebra, too. [laughter] And I liked algebra.

*Really? Kind of unusual. So there were advantages to the system?*

Yes, absolutely.

*So that you could move along at your own pace if you wanted to.*

Yes, you could learn "above your head" because the teacher would be teaching . . .

*Those who were bright enough or interested.*

Or interested. So by the time we got into the eighth grade, we were already knowledgeable about algebra.

*Oh, amazing. You were mentioning about the Harmony Social Club getting the books. Tell me about that club.*

Well, they were comprised mostly of the women . . . wives of the farmers here in this district. And that was why it was called Harmony, it was kind of a pun on Harmon district. And they would meet once a month. And to me, they were more like a P.T.A. in the sense that they really supported the school and they gave dances.

*When did they start? Were they in existence as long as you went to school?*

As long as I can remember. I think they were in existence before I was even born. I'm not sure, but I think so. That was a social life for the ladies in the neighborhood.

*Your mother was active in it?*

Very active in it.

*So tell me . . . well, several things I want to know. First where and when did they meet? Women were so busy, when did they get to meet?*

Well, they usually would meet in the afternoon at somebody's home. And sometimes they would even have an all-day affair and have a potluck where everybody brought some food. But they would take turns being a hostess. And they would usually meet in the afternoon for two or three hours. And the main focus of the activity was the school. Any other activities they undertook was usually to raise money to provide play equipment, books, maps . . . I don't recall that they bought musical instruments.

*Did you have music in the school?*

Minimal. Minimal music. Only if we had a teacher that could play the piano. [laughs]

*Now you said these women fixed the lunches, they all took turns fixing the lunches?*

No. I think there were two or three women in the district that were paid to fix those school lunches.

*Did the Harmony social club have anything to do with the lunches?*

Not to my knowledge. That wasn't their part.

*It was the library, equipment. Did they come to the school? Were they visible at the school or did they have functions there?*

Well, they had functions there. Like I say, they had dances there and primarily the dances were to raise money for the school.

*Would that be for everyone?*

Everybody could come.

*All the families and adults and did whole families go?*

Well, as a rule, you know, even the little kids went and then they'd go to sleep on a chair or something.

*Did you go?*

Oh, yes.

*Did you dance?*

When I got old enough to dance, I did. Well, one of our big social times was dancing.

*How often would the dances be held?*

Well, in the summertime probably once a month and not so often in the wintertime because of the cold and having to travel in the cold. But in the summer they were quite often. And then they had picnics. The school is built on ten acres and so there is quite a bit of space. And they had planted a grove of trees at one edge of the school on the

north side of the property. And they had a regular little grove of trees there and it was a wonderful place to have a picnic.

*Oh, how nice. Now would they charge a certain small amount to raise some money?*

No. That was just to get together and have a social time.

*However, the dances they would charge a little bit?*

Yes, but the picnics were usually just a social time. And then the men would have a softball game going or a . . .

*Horseshoes?*

Pitching horseshoes. And the women . . . most of them would just sit around and visit. [laughs]

*You could see, you know, in this isolated area how important that would be because you couldn't get into town very much.*

Not too much, at least from our place, it's almost nine miles to Fallon.

*While you were still in the Harmon school, how often did you get into Fallon if at all?*

Well, probably at least once a week. Lots of time when Dad would be going to town on business, he would take us along and leave us with Grandpa and Grandma Nygren because that's the only time we really got to see them. So we could usually ride in with him and then he'd do his business and we'd visit with Grandpa and Grandma. And

usually if Dad wasn't going to town, like in the summer when he was busy haying or something, Mom would have to go in and shop for groceries. We'd go in with her then. So I'd say we got to town on an average probably once a week.

*From your earliest memories of going into Fallon, what did Fallon look like, thinking back?*

Well, I can't remember too much about Fallon. Practically all of the business at the time was on Maine Street. There was anything but residences on Williams Avenue.

*Really?*

And my earliest memory, there were cars that were parked at an angle to the sidewalk on each side of the street. And in the center of the street, there were two rows of cars parked parallel. The one side would be facing north and the other side would be facing south. So there was a lot of parking and like I say, most of the businesses were on Maine Street.

*What brought so many cars?*

Well, I'm not sure there was so many cars, but just within a block or two, the place would be pretty well . . .

*That's where everyone parked?*

Yes, everyone parked there. There wasn't any other place to park.

*So, let's see. Maybe in the early 1930's, when you first started to be able to recollect what*



*it was like. Tell me a little more. How far out did the houses go? Was it a very limited town?*

The town of Fallon, it was very limited.

*What kind of population, do you know?*

No, I really don't. But you know, when we were in high school, there was about two thousand population in the town, but another two thousand out in the farm area. I really don't have a knowledge of what that population was in those days.

*What were the roads? Were they already paved by then?*

My earliest recollections, we would take a dirt road all through the desert here to the north and east of Rattlesnake Hill and then we would come into town from the north. And then when they did build the road, we would enter Fallon on Stillwater Avenue. That was the main drag then. Now East Williams Avenue and West Williams.

*Would take you right into Williams.*

Yes. But the original approach to Fallon for us was on the Stillwater Road which is the main part of town. It is called Stillwater Avenue.

*Was there anything there then that's not here now, that closed down?*

A lot of gas stations have closed and it seemed like we almost had a gas station on every corner. And now there's just a few. And one of the biggest changes is now so much of it is self-serve. In the old days, you know, the station attendant, and usually he was the owner,

would fill your gas and wash your windshield and check your tires for air. You hardly ever find a station that will do that anymore.

*Do you think that a lot closed because they were individually owned and now these big, big companies come in like Shell and Arco and . . .*

That's probably a lot of it. The big companies have come in.

*Now Kent Store, was that the only store in the early days? The biggest store in the early days?*

Well, it was certainly the biggest store in the early days. But there were other stores. There was a Toggery, which was a tailor store.

*Toggery?*

Yes, they called it the Toggery. And there was two or three meat markets and a bakery that I can remember and of course there were always the saloons.

*Was the Nugget and some of the other saloons already there?*

The Nugget wasn't there at that time. There was a saloon down the street called Barrel House. And it was there until after the war . . . World War II. And some of those independently owned saloons have closed, but the Nugget has come on and then there is the Stockman's which wasn't there before. And the Gallagher's Livestock Auction was not there.

*Oh, when did that come in? I wanted to ask about that.*

Probably mid-forties.

*And I read and I haven't been able to verify it yet, I read somewhere in my research, that's the only big auction house in the whole state.*

That's my understanding.

*The main one.*

It's the only one.

*In fact, I was shocked when I read it. [laughter] And I remember when you all took me there. We'll talk more about that in a little bit. I want to go to the Depression years. And you were still very young.*

Yes.

*Because that's just in the thirties. First let's talk about . . . did the Depression affect your family's ranch?*

Not to my knowledge. The Depression . . . the way it affected our family was . . . of course, we probably used more chickens and our own hogs and an occasional beef cattle for our meat and I think probably our transportation, the family probably didn't go to town quite so often. But a lot of farmers failed then and my father bought several farms from those people that quote "couldn't make it."

*Now did they have a mortgage that they had to pay?*

Well, I think he had loaned them money and they couldn't pay him back. So he ended up taking the property over. Then, the same thing in town. Grandpa Nygren, I think, probably had kind of a nest egg because he had sold his farm in Minnesota and he bought two or three houses in town. And it could

have been for the same reason . . . people just couldn't afford it.

*Couldn't pay the banks for those loans?*

Or couldn't pay him back for a loan he made. So they ended up with houses and farms that they never expected to have.

*People left . . . people had to leave?*

Yes.

*Were there also during the Depression people leaving, because I know that some of those men had to work at other jobs to keep their farm and family together. Was there a shortage of other jobs? Did the construction stop for a while?*

Well, I think it did. I just don't think there was a lot of building going on at that time and I think the jobs weren't all that plentiful.

*Had the mining all stopped?*

Pretty much. Pretty much. The only mining going on then I think was some independent miner that had a claim somewhere and he'd go out and try to dig enough money to sustain himself.

*But not where people were being hired to do the mining?*

No. No.

*Now during that period from the late thirties on, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) came. Now what do you remember. What can you tell us about that? Their work and their presence in town. Can you tell us much?*

I can't remember too much, but I can remember the CCC camps. They were like barracks. There was one about thirty miles to the east of Fallon and there was one or two camps in Fallon. I can remember those barracks building and after they closed the CCC program, some people bought part of those barracks to build a home with.

*About how many barracks would there be in the one in Fallon . . . was there one in Fallon or two?*

I think there were two in Fallon. And I think there would be three to four barracks for each of those camps. I don't remember a lot about the boys in those camps except seeing them in town in their khaki uniforms. And a lot of them joined the amateur baseball, softball clubs in town. Then at that time, too, they had a league of basketball teams. They weren't high school teams, they were just citizens. And they had several teams that would play each other for the championship. And I think those CCC boys, a lot of them joined those teams. First of all for the sport and secondly because the teams needed them. I don't remember seeing them in the stores very much, but, you know, maybe they were in the bars, but I never frequented the bars. [laughter]

*Did they go to the dances?*

I think they did.

*Were they young fellows?*

Yes, very young.

*Were there any of the fellows who were black because you didn't have others here, but I wondered because of this program?*

I can't remember. I doubt it because at one time Fallon had an ordinance that any black in the town had to be out of town by dark.

*Oh, is that right?*

Terrible.

*Is that right?*

Yes.

*Oh, you're the first one who told me that. What time period is this?*

Well, from the time I was a little girl I think up until World War II. Yes. I think it was a pretty rigid town.

*Very conservative.*

Well, they referred to Nevada as the Mississippi of the West.

*Oh, see I hadn't heard that.*

Even the night clubs in Reno wouldn't have a black.

*Is that right? Oh.*

They had their own club.

*OK. So whoever was bringing the CCC weeded out . . .*

I think so.

*Yes. So that they wouldn't have any trouble. Any other ethnic groups or was there a restriction against other ethnic groups?*

Not to my knowledge.

*Now, about the work that the CCC did. Did you see any of that going on? Was any of it out here in the Stillwater area?*

Not to my knowledge. I know they built the cement structures and the irrigation ditches. And they did a lot of work up at Lahontan Dam, one of them being the picnic area that I talked about. But I don't have very much knowledge of other work they did. And of course, we were going to school then so we never saw them.

*And did any of them stay?*

Yes, several of them stayed and became wonderful citizens . . . married a Fallon girl and stayed on and were wonderful citizens. I couldn't name them all, but I think there was at least a dozen, probably.

*Any of them around to interview?*

In Reno there's one.

*In Reno? That worked here?*

In Fallon, yes.

*It would be good to interview someone who was involved.*

It would be, yes.

*Would you get that name?*

Yes.

*And when the project finished, are there markers around where they did things or is it just a quiet testimony to their work?*

I understand on those concrete structures that they built for the irrigation canals and

ditches, they all have a mark in the concrete that says "CCC," but the evidence of where their camp was, there's no marker there. And to my knowledge, I think they probably did mark what they worked on, but all I'm aware of are the concrete structures to the irrigation ditches.

*Now, I want to take you into your high school years. I want you to tell me when you first started. Of course, you were with Maie, so you were unlike some who felt a little lost or scared, you had a buddy. Tell me your very, very first start in high school in Fallon . . . the travelling and going through the day.*

Well, of course, we rode the bus to school.

*Did it stop all around? How many kids on the bus when you first started?*

Oh, probably forty.

*And who drove the bus?*

Well, usually it was a mature high school student, such as a senior or a post-graduate student. And of course, they had to take a driver's test. But they would take the bus to their home and start out in the morning from their home and they had a regular route where they picked the students up. And they didn't have to have a chaperon or somebody to keep the kids under control. [laughter] Everybody behaved themselves because if you didn't, you could get turned into the school principal and then you really would be in trouble.

*So you were all scared. What time would you be picked up?*

Oh, around eight o'clock.

*How long did it take from the time you picked up everyone and got into Fallon to the school?*

Almost an hour.

*Now, where was the school and what was the name of the school?*

Well, it was the Churchill County High School and it was on south Maine Street. Now that school is referred to as the Churchill County Junior High School.

*That's the large, light green building?*

Yes. But only when we went to school, it was white.

*So tell me how you felt when you first took the bus and was starting high school.*

Oh, I think we felt like we were grown up. [laughter] You know, that you'd make a big step from going to a country school to a city school and on a bus at that. I can't remember too much about my first day. I think we had kind of an orientation from the principal of the school. And we were told of what their expectations were. And then we had class assignments. And we would report to the room wherever the class was being held.

*Now this was a whole different step.*

Yes.

*You know, different teachers each class.*

Yes, every class was a different teacher. And we had a homeroom where we gathered first thing in the morning.

*How many kids in the school about when you started?*

Well, let's see. There were eighty in our graduating class, so probably when we first started, there were 250-300 kids . . . somewhere in there. You know, we considered ourselves a fair-sized school. Like I say, once we got off the bus, we went to, what we called our homeroom and we were in there for at least twenty minutes when the school took up at nine o'clock. And the teacher of that homeroom would take the roll and mark those that were absent. And then there was a bell that rang that told us it was time to go to the next class and we had ten minutes to get from one class to the next. And so we would just go to whatever room we had for our class. If we didn't have a class, then we had to go to the study hall and that was a large room with lots of desks where, oh, probably between seventy-five and a hundred kids would be sitting.

*Oh, my! Was there a teacher or a monitor.*

A monitor. She was actually a teacher, but each teacher took turns supervising study hall. And there was a library there and we could check books out from the library. If we didn't have books or lessons that we had to work on, we could take a book out of the library and read. And then when the bell rang again, we'd go to whatever class we were supposed to go to.

*Did you bring lunch there or did they have a cafeteria?*

We brought lunch for a while, but Maie and I started working at a soda fountain called "Kick's Place" and it was downtown in the main part of town and we would go for

the noon hour to wait on the kids and the customers.

*There was enough time to do that?*

Yes. We had a whole hour and as soon as we got out of class, we'd rush down to Kick's.

*How far was it from the school?*

Oh, six or eight blocks.

*Oh, my goodness! Is it still there?*

Well, it isn't Kick's Place now, but, yes, the building is still there. It's Los Rosales Mexican restaurant now. Most of the menu was hamburgers and milkshakes or sodas or banana splits, or hot dogs.

*How old were you when you started working there?*

Oh, I think we were sophomores.

*Oh, my goodness.*

So then we didn't have to take a lunch because part of our pay was our lunch. And we could have whatever we wanted, but it was mostly a hamburger and a milkshake. But then we would work that whole time. And it also had a little area for candy and we had at least twenty different selections of candy.

*Oh, my goodness!*

And kids could come in . . . and of course the candy was wrapped, but kids could come in and they could buy a penny's worth of candy or a nickel's worth of candy or dime

or whatever. And one of our jobs was to wait on the candy counter.

*Did you get back to school on time?*

Yes, we made it.

*You weren't late.*

Well, I don't think we were late.

*How did you find out about the job?*

I really don't know. I think Maie was the one who heard about it first and whether she heard it from a friend or . . . I really don't recall that. Or maybe they announced it in class that Kick's was looking for students, I don't know.

*Were you the only two students working there or were there others?*

There were others, but I can only remember working with Maie and the wife of the owner and the owner and maybe one other student.

*Was it very attractive to have twins?*

I don't know. [laughter] They never mentioned it.

*In the school was there any special attention because you were twins or everyone just took you for granted?*

Well, I don't think there was a lot of attention given because the year we were born, there were five sets of twins born that year.



*How come?*

I don't know. [laughter] I can't tell you why that happened.

*That's amazing!*

That is. So there were more than one set of twins in school. In fact I can recall there were at least three.

*Amazing!*

Three sets of twins.

*Did you both take the same subjects?*

Pretty much so. The school curriculum was divided into two or three different things. One curriculum was aimed at business and it would include typing and business arithmetic and accounting and things like that. And then there was an agricultural component and usually farm kids would go to that. But, of course, they had to take math and history and other things, but there were certain subjects that were more focused on farming. And then there was a curriculum that we entered into was called . . . I want to say . . . I think it was arts and science, but it was mainly preparing you for college.

*So you both knew when you entered high school that you were going to go to college?*

We knew it from way down. [laughs] Mom used to say "when you go to college" not "if you go to college." It was "when you go to college."

*OK. So you took the proper courses and you knew in your mind you were going to go on.*

That course was particularly aimed at getting you ready for college.

*Meeting the requirements of entering.*

English and language.

*What language did you take?*

Latin.

*Latin! Latin! [laughter]*

Well, we had an aunt visiting us from North Dakota the summer before we enrolled in school and she said to my mother, "If the girls don't take anything else in high school, you make sure they take Latin." She says, "Because Latin is the basis for the English language really." And she says, "You just don't learn Latin, you learn grammar and grammatical structure." And she says, "It'll be with them the rest of their lives."

*Amazing that they taught it here because I don't think they teach it much now.*

I don't think they do either. But we had a Latin teacher that really had been, I think, a missionary in China. And when she came over here, I don't know whether she came directly to Fallon, but she had a sister who was married and on a farm and I think she came to Fallon for that reason. And she taught Latin, and French, and Spanish.

*Oh, my gosh! She was good in all different languages. My, my.*

Oh, she was very good. Very good.

*Did you take the Latin?*

Yes, I enjoyed it. I took two years of it.

*Oh, my goodness! And it probably has been beneficial.*

Oh, it has been very beneficial for me because my profession was in the medical field and almost all the medical terms are based on Latin.

*Now as you were going through your high school years and you knew you were going to college, did you begin to know that you were going to go into the field you eventually did or were you still kind of exploring?*

Actually, I thought that I would be a teacher just like, well, Maie did, too. That was one of the professions you could go into, nursing or teaching. And I didn't know anything about dietetics at that time, but at that time, Dad was a school board member at Harmon school and he used to talk about the low pay the teachers got. And, you know, he thought it was awful, because, being a board member, I think he saw the value of teachers. But he used to talk about what low pay they had and not to be a teacher.

*Oh, isn't that strange.*

Well, Maie went ahead and went into the field of education, and I kind of horsed around and decided that I would go into dietetics.

*How did you reach that? What did you learn about the field?*

I didn't know a lot about the field, except that it was an area where you dealt with foods and nutrition. And I thought, "Well, that might be as desirable a job as teaching."

So when I went to college my curriculum was basic and some of the basic courses like history and English and math. But then I enrolled in the school home economics and you could either be a teacher or you could go into sewing or cooking and dietetics. So I chose dietetics. And I guess it was then when Maie and I started to take different classes and go different ways.

*We'll cover that in more depth next time because I want to cover your adult years later. I want to go back to your high school years again and I want to know what it was like for teenage girls. I know you probably both were real cute and popular. What was it like growing up as a teenager and going to high school? Were you limited because of the bus?*

We were limited because of the bus. We couldn't take sports. I would have loved to play basketball, but Mom and Dad couldn't afford to go into town every day to get me after basketball practice, so . . .

*And you didn't have a car to use . . . an extra car.*

No. And to start, we weren't old enough to drive, either . . . alone.

*Oh.*

So we couldn't take what you might call the extracurricular things like music or sports . . .

*Any clubs?*

Or glee club, which was a singing group. The one thing we did do, though, and that was we took debate.

*Oh, did you take debate? I know Carl Dodge took debate.*

Well, Mom really helped strongly about having us take debate. The class met only once a week, so she took it on herself to drive us to town.

*Oh, wonderful. Now when did they have that debate? Right after school?*

No, in the evening.

*Oh, I see. So she'd come and she'd wait and stay?*

Come and stay.

*It was an evening activity? Was it through the school?*

Yes, it was at the school. In fact, the principal, Mr. McCracken, taught it.

*And did you get any credits for that?*

Yes, I think we got a credit.

*And you both were in it? And how long did you participate in the debating?*

I can't remember, but I think it was just one year.

*Did you go to any of the debating competitions?*

No, just among the kids in the class.

*And so did you belong to any other clubs or groups like 4-H.*

Yes, we were 4-H club members from the time we were ten years old until we got through,

well, I think until we started college. Maybe even the first year of college we were in 4-H.

*OK, let's go back to the 4-H when you were ten. Tell me what that was like, how many times did you meet, and where.*

We usually met at one of the member's homes. We'd rotate and take turns having the quote "club." And we met during the summertime, usually starting in, I think, in May and going through until after the 4H camp in August. We would perform just like a regular club. We'd elect officers and we'd have a president and a vice-president and a secretary. I can't remember if we had a treasurer because I don't think we paid dues, we just . . . well, I take that back. I think we did have a treasurer because we raised money to go to 4-H camp. You could take cooking or sewing. Some girls took some kind of raising an animal like a lamb or a calf or a sheep or something, but we took sewing. And of course, started out with a simple little thing like making a tea towel. But by the time we were probably going into high school, we were making our own clothes.

*Who was the leader?*

We had a leader in the community and they took turns. I think my mother was the leader one year and Jessie Freeman was the leader one year and then the ladies took turns. We also had a Cooperative Extension agent that came out and always met with the 4-H club kids and also this lady would also meet with the Harmony Social Club. She was a guest member, but she would attend almost all the meetings.

*Was 4-H under the Cooperative Extension or was it independent?*

No, it was under the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

*Now, the person who led the meetings, was that a volunteer parent at each meeting? Who would teach you the sewing and teach you the things you were learning?*

Well, a volunteer parent would, like Mom would teach sewing or another parent would teach cooking or, you know, if it was an animal, then maybe it was a father. The leader of the club would, of course, attend all of the meetings, but the club members themselves conducted the meetings. If you were president, you conducted the meeting. If you were secretary, you read the minutes from the last meeting, so early on you learned about parliamentary procedure and participation as an officer in an organization. And we would usually have a demonstration about basting or making a hem or putting in a lining or cutting a pattern out so that every meeting had a focus for learning a new thing. One of our big aims was to go to the 4-H camp in the summertime at Lake Tahoe. And one of our extracurricular activities was to raise money to pay for the kids to go to camp. So as we got older, we would help give a dance at the schoolhouse and one of the jobs of the girls would be to call up the different ladies in the district and ask for a donation of sandwiches to serve like a midnight supper at the dance. Everybody would stop at midnight and have sandwiches and coffee or cake or whatever. So that was another kind of a responsibility each club member had to assume was to call up a certain number of ladies in the district and ask if they would donate sandwiches. And of course, the ladies always did. But it was a new learning experience to have to do that. And then we would make root beer and

bottle it to sell at the dance. We made quite a bit of money on the root beer and the dances. Usually we raised enough money so that any kid that wanted to go to camp could go.

*I have a couple of questions. First, because you were talking about the officers running it, so was there a wide age range in the 4-H group that met weekly in the group?*

Yes, I think so. There would be some girls that were in high school and could be good officers while, say when we first entered as ten year olds, we just observed what was going on and participated, of course. But in doing this, you learn how to be an officer. And that was kind of an experience where you start out doing nothing, but by the time you are five or six years older, sixteen or seventeen years of age, then you're the one that assumes an office.

*So you'd meet weekly. Now tell me how many girls and what would be the youngest and the oldest age range? Were they all girls?*

In our club they were all girls. The youngest was ten. You couldn't be any younger than ten. And then the oldest could go clear through high school and I think there were even some that for their freshman year in college would also continue being a 4-H member. I think we got so busy at college that our 4-H activities pretty much stopped then.

*In the Stillwater area, how many girls met each week? Did you have only one group or several?*

I can't answer for Stillwater, but in Harmon . . . .

*Or Harmon. Was that your district?*

Yes, our district is Harmon. Would be, oh, ten to fifteen girls . . . maybe twenty, but I think average would be fifteen.

*And that would be one group of different ages?*

Yes. For sewing.

*Oh, I see. According to the major. Did you pick what you wanted to do?*

Yes.

*I see. So that no matter what the age, you all started learning at the same pace?*

Pretty much so.

*Did those that have money pay their own way to camp or did this raising of funds pay for whoever wanted to go?*

This I think was different all over. In our district, we always tried to raise enough money to pay everybody's way so no one family had to pay for their child going to camp. But in other areas, in other districts, they didn't go about raising money. And so each family had to pay for their own children going to camp.

*Which meant that some couldn't go.*

That's right.

*Yes. So then describe what it was like at the 4-H camp at Tahoe.*

Well . . .

*Your eyes glisten.*

Yes. [laughter] Well, it was really a fun time. Well, I think all the time we went to

camp, we lived in tents and they had a wooden floor and then the tents were kind of like the army tents, you could roll up the side flaps. And those tents were all erected before we got to camp, so we didn't have to put them up or anything like that. And there were about, oh, eight to ten to a tent. Each tent had to maintain its tent. And that meant you had to have your beds made, you had to have your floors swept. During the day, you could roll the sides' flaps up so the tent would be well-ventilated and aired. And everybody pretty much had to go to bed at the same time at night because everybody was sleeping eight to ten in a tent. They had a main cookhouse where we all gathered . . . everybody from throughout the state gathered for their meals. And the kids had to take turns serving the meals, being waitresses. And this is kind of learning shared responsibility because you had to take turns doing it. And some of the older kids even helped in the cooking of the meals. And then of course, there was the washing of the dishes. And kids had to do that. Not the same ones that did the cooking, but there would be a group assigned to do the dishes and you did it for at least one meal, maybe sometimes more than one meal. Most of the activities in the daytime were aimed at learning something . . . some kind of a craft like leather work or bead work or . . . I can't think of other kinds of activities, but there were always different kinds of activities for 4-H kids to participate in. And then in the afternoon, we'd usually have some games . . . softball games . . . or we'd go swimming. We could go down to the lake to swim. That was pretty well supervised, though, because you had to have lifeguards and older kids had to watch the younger kids for swimming. And then at night, we usually had some kind of a program. A lady by the name of Florence Bovett was usually the main leader

of the program at night. There would be entertainment by some other kids in 4-H or there would be some speaker brought in to talk about some aspect of 4-H. And we always started out singing "Home Means Nevada" that was our big . . . [laughs]

*What was that again?*

"Home Means Nevada." That's the state song.

*Oh. [laughs] I should make you sing it on tape. [laughter]*

I'm no singer. But I can always remember Mrs. Bovett singing . . . leading the group in singing "Home Means Nevada" and we did it every night. [laughter] It was just like the national anthem. [laughter] So we were kept busy. And it was kind of supervised, but at the same time, it was a learning experience.

*I have several questions. First, you mentioned it was statewide, so this was a huge camp.*

Yes.

*A huge camp. Were there girls and boys at this camp?*

Yes.

*And how big an area and about how many tents? It sounds like it must be enormous!*

Well, it was quite large. Although, you know, statewide could mean one thing, but in the days when we went . . . oh! A lot of people couldn't afford to go and especially the people from four hundred miles away. They couldn't hardly ever make state camp.

*Like up in the Lander County.*

Yes. Or down in Lincoln County which is at least four hundred miles away. One or two kids could come from those counties.

*I see.*

Whereas Churchill County was almost always the county with the most representation.

*Would you go in a bus or buses from Churchill County?*

No.

*How did you get there?*

Well, each club arranged their own transportation. I can remember Mom driving our group up.

*In a car pool? How many from your group would go?*

Almost all because we raised the money to pay the way. So there'd be two or three carloads.

*And how long was the camp . . . time period?*

It was a week long.

*A week long. And there had to be some very organized people who arranged who would sleep in which tent.*

They usually tried, I think, to assign the different clubs . . .

*To do their own?*

To their own tent.



*Sounds wonderful.*

Yes. Well, I thought it was pretty nice. Everybody did. And we had public showers and toilets where the kids could take a shower after they got back from swimming. In the first camp that we had was up in the hills just below the fire station at Zephyr Cove and it was quite a walk down to the lake. It was over a mile and back up a hill. Well, the soil around Lake Tahoe was terribly, terribly dusty. So by the time the kids got back from their swimming expedition, they almost had to take a shower they were so dusty! [laughter] I think the tents usually tried to be of one club if possible. And we always had contests. Different tents got awards for being the cleanest, the neatest.

*Good incentives!*

Yes.

*Yes. Smart.*

It was. Yes, I think the 4-H experience was just wonderful.

*Oh, how many years did you go to camp?*

I would think almost every year that we were in 4-H, we went to camp. I can't remember missing a one. And there again I think that was because Mom felt it was important that we go and interact with other kids.

*And when you went there, would you each pack a case or pack a suitcase?*

A little suitcase. Maie and I kind of shared a suitcase, but each member had a suitcase. And you had to keep that neat and clean.

*Wonderful habits.*

Yes. And clothes had to be hung. They had these support spikes out to support the roof of the tent and you could hang dresses from those support bars. And so clothes had to be hung. Everything had to be neat. It was almost like being in an army, I'm sure.

*Being in the military.*

Yes.

*That sounds wonderful.*

It was a wonderful experience.

*Have we completed the 4-H experience?*

I think so. I would just say that it's too bad every kid can't take 4-H.

*So we will stop today. We'll end today's interview and then in June we'll continue and finish all the other things that you need to tell us. So this is the end of the first interview.*

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the second session of an interview with Myrl Nygren at her home at 6800 Mission Road, Fallon, Nevada. The date is June 10, 1994 and this is Sylvia Arden, interviewer.

*Sylvia Arden: Good morning, Myrl. I'm glad that we could meet today to continue the interview. I want to go back in time to get a little bit of information on the Nygren house. Is this the house that you lived in when you were born?*

Myrl Nygren: No. This house was built in 1951. The original home that we were born

in . . . lived in, was sold to a church group and was moved off the property and was remodeled and you wouldn't even recognize it now.

*Several questions: why was it sold and do you know the location where that is now?*

Well, it was sold primarily because we had built this house and there was no need to have the other house. The people that bought it were just starting a church and didn't have a lot of money, so I don't think they paid very much for it. But they bought it and moved it off of the place and it now sits on Crook Road. It's called the Country Church.

*So you did live in that house that was sold growing up.*

Yes. Yes.

*And can you give us some description of what it was like at that time . . . the size of it, what kind of materials? Just a little bit so we can get a visual picture of the kind of the house the family lived in in that early period.*

Well, it was a multiple of add-ons. I think my father's original homestead house was just a one room structure. And then they added on a living room and a bedroom and then eventually a porch that was screened. And finally, when the family got bigger, they closed in the porch because we had to use that as a bedroom/ sleeping room. Then we had a porch on south end of the house and eventually it was closed in to make room for a bathroom. It was all wood-framed structure and we had linoleum on the floors. We heated the house first with a coal stove and then about early 1930's or mid-1930's, we got an

oil stove which was a lot nicer because you could let it run all night whereas a coal stove you had to build a fire every morning. My mother's cooking stove was just a wood-coal stove. And she had one oven and warming ovens above. We had what I think was wonderful and you don't see them anymore was a pantry. It was right off the kitchen and it was a small, long, narrow room, but we kept all our supplies in there and our mixing machines and everything in there. So, you know, you didn't have to have anything out in the kitchen on the counters, it was all in the pantry.

*Are there pictures of that house in these albums?*

Maybe one or two, yes.

*And in that early house, when you were a child, was there plumbing? Was there a toilet and sink and plumbing in the house?*

No. The best I can remember is we had a small, shallow sink that was on a wooden cabinet and we had a hand pump to pump the water into the sink. And we didn't have any toilet facilities except an outhouse that we used. And our bath habits were Mom would heat water on the stove and she'd pour it in the laundry tub [laughter] in front of the stove so we'd be warm and take our bath that way. [laughter]

*Now when you were pumping the water, where did that water for home use come from?*

From the well on the property.

*OK. So you had a well.*

Yes.

*I know there was early electricity in Fallon because of the Newlands project. Did you have electricity early?*

Well, not real early. I can remember when they installed the electricity out here. It was a big day, I'll tell you! I think it was in the . . . like 1929 or something. And the men came out and hooked up the house with electricity. That was a big thing when could pull a string and get lights that come on rather than light a coal oil lamp. [laughter]

*So did your father or did someone have to wire your house to be able to use that electricity? How did that occur?*

Well, I can't be positive. But I think when the men came and installed the electricity, they also wired it into the house.

*You said you finally got a bathroom and toilet. When was that when you had inside plumbing? Do you remember how old you were about?*

Well, I think it was before the war, so it was probably around 1940.

*Oh, that late.*

That late. And my brother Ray was primarily instrumental in doing all the plumbing.

*Wow!*

And fixing up the shower with the bathtub and hooking it up to a water heater. There was electric then.

*That must have been exciting, too.*

Oh, it was!

*We just take things for granted now. [laughter]*

Yes, it was a big day.

*And anything more about the house?*

Well, not really. It was a roomy enough house. We had enough bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen and primarily we lived in the kitchen. But it was, you know, not a really warm house because it was a wood structure and it didn't have insulation or anything like that.

*Oh, so how did you keep warm at night?*

We went to bed. [laughter] No, we'd use the coal stove, but, you know, in those days . . . especially before we had electricity, we were probably in bed by eight or nine o'clock.

*And getting up early.*

Yes.

*To do your chores.*

Five or six o'clock in the morning.

*OK. So that gives me a good idea of the house. Now, I want a little more on the ditches and the swimming in the ditches. I want to know a little more about that because that's something that people away from this region don't experience.*

Well, we could go swimming during the summer when the water was in the ditches. And primarily we went swimming in the canals which are the bigger ditches to carry the water. And we had to go about two miles

to where there was a nice, gentle place below a drop and we could swim as long as we wanted. And at that time, the water was pretty pure and pretty clean. And no one worried about getting any kind of an infection or . . .

*About how many kids would usually be there?*

Ten or twelve. And we'd jump off the ditch bank or we'd jump off the drop. And in the early part of the summer when it was kind of hot, there was always moss and we had to pull the moss off our heads, but it never kept us from swimming. [laughter]

*How deep was it? Was it over your head?*

Probably when we were five or six it was over our heads, but by the time we grew up to ten or twelve, we could stand on the bottom of the ditch and we would not be under water.

*Would people watch the little kids?*

Oh, yes.

Yes.

The parents were always there watching.

*That sounds like a lot of fun. Did you ice skate on it, too? On the ditches or the canals?*

Well, the ditches and canals were pretty well drained in the wintertime.

*I see!*

So unless you had a major canal that had some stagnant water in it, there was no water to freeze. But my folks had what they called a garden pond. It was just an excavation of

dirt, and every time Dad irrigated, he'd fill that pond with water so he could water the lawn and the garden and everything. In the wintertime that pond would freeze over and then we could skate.

*Well, that sounds like fun. What kind of ice skates did you have?*

Oh, the clamp-on kind.

*You don't see those anymore. [laughter]*

No. I think that by our junior or senior year in high school, we got lace boot skates. But up until then they were just clamp-on skates.

*So now I want to move to the early description of Stillwater. Did you go over there? Was there a little community there that you can remember that you witnessed?*

Yes, just a small community. There was a grocery store that sold not just groceries, but soda pop and candy and the things kids like.

*Who ran that store?*

Mrs. Greenwood was the owner and operator and after she died, her son, Leslie Greenwood, operated it. Our main reason to go to Stillwater was there was a heated swimming pool there and it was enclosed with a wooden frame and then galvanized iron to cover the walls.

*Was that there as long as you can remember or was that built after you were . . . ?*

No, it was there as long as I can remember. In fact, even before I can remember, there was

an outside swimming pool operated by the same outfit. And it was larger, but the man that owned that committed suicide . . . I don't know just how, but after he died, I think his widow had the pool filled in with dirt. So I never got to swim in the big pool. It was always the enclosed pool.

*That's pretty advanced for a tiny town in that early period, don't you think?*

Oh, yes.

*To have a swimming pool.*

Yes. Well, it was primitive by today's standards, you know. It was a concrete pool and . . .

*Did you have to pay to use it, a little bit?*

You know, I can't remember that. If we did, Mom paid. I wasn't aware if whether we paid or not.

*How many kids were there . . . the adults would go there, too, I suppose.*

Oh, yes.

*About how many people would use that?*

Well, when we used it, there would be a carload of us kids and Mom would usually drive us down there and we'd swim for an hour or two and then come home.

*Did they have a place there to change?*

Yes.

*Yes? That's so interesting for such a rural place. At that time, of course, Fallon was the county*

*seat. What was left in Stillwater that you can remember?*

Well, that grocery store as I mentioned . . . Mrs. Greenwood's. And the swimming pool. And then there was an adobe structure that I was told was a pony express stop and it was across the street from the Greenwood store and a little bit to the east. And it was a very attractive adobe structure with a front porch like you see in the westerns. A wooden sidewalk and a shade structure over it. It was there until the earthquake in 1954 . . . '56. And when that earthquake hit, it just flattened it.

*Oh. Yes. I understand that was the main area affected by the earthquake.*

It was a main core. Well, Dixie Valley was the main area, but you know, Stillwater's just on this side of Dixie Valley.

*Were you damaged very much by that earthquake?*

There was a few cracks in the house and one of the fields dropped thirteen inches.

*Oh my! But no major damage luckily.*

No, not at our place. I'm sure we got off better than a lot of people did.

*While we're on Stillwater, I want to go to the Indian reservation. And I want you to start from your earliest memories of what the Indian reservation was like, what kind of interaction you had with it. Let's start with that.*

Well, the first thing I can remember about the reservation is when we were little kids, we

used to go to the Baptist Missionary Sunday School there and we were the only white kids there. The rest were all Indians. But the missionaries used board here at our place.

*In your house?*

Well, they would eat their meals here.

*Oh.*

Especially their noon meal. And so Mom got real friendly with all of those missionaries and we felt real comfortable being there because we knew the missionaries and it didn't bother us that we were the only white kids. But the place was always packed. And I can't remember . . . I think people look old when you're a real young kid. So there were probably real old Indians and middle aged Indians. [laughter] And there was a headquarters house that the Indian agent lived in. Eventually they built what you'd call a community hall where they could have dances and meetings and other things. And now they have a gymnasium and all kinds of office buildings for the housing authority and Head Start.

*I want to go back again because I want to find out what kind of housing the Indians at that time lived in. If you can remember . . . just from the time that you can remember.*

They lived in wooden shacks very much like our house was although it may not have been as quite as big. But it was wooden and they didn't have any fancy yards or anything like that. They just had a wooden house with a window. And they had primitive conditions just like we did. They had to carry their water or pump it from a well. And they didn't have electricity and they had to use outhouses just

like we did. The only difference I could say is, we were able . . . and I suppose this is with all the white citizens, were able to advance into better living conditions sooner than the Indians could.

*About how many of these small homes were there? How many families at that time about? Is it the same as now? Was it less?*

No. No. There were fewer families then. Now, a lot of the younger generation that used to live elsewhere in towns and other cities have moved back to the reservation primarily because they have housing provided by HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development]. And they have so many benefits by living on the reservation than they do if they don't live on the reservation.

*Can you tell me if it's fully subsidized or did they have to contribute in some way? How does it work? Some have newer houses, some don't. How does that work, do you know?*

Well, I don't know it totally, but my understanding is that on the HUD housing projects, each Indian that gets a house has to participate in the building of it and contribute so much in labor. And then they are inspected every year to be sure that they're maintaining their house. And the HUD people do that. And if it needs painting or they need to repair something, the HUD representatives will tell them and then they have to do it. And they'll come back and do an inspection to see that they did do it.

*That's good.*

Many of the newer ones have a little bit . . . you know, nice yards like an attempt to grow a lawn or some flowers. But the earlier ones,



it was just a house sitting in the desert. And at the time, I'm sure they were grateful to have a nice home. They have water evaporation air coolers. And they have stoves heated with stove oil. And some of them, I understand, have fireplaces, but I've only been in one home down there. And it was very simple and plain, but, you know, very comfortable.

*Liveable. Several questions and I want to go to back to the earlier period before we come to current. Did they have some kind of water allotment for use if they wanted to develop any crops or if they wanted to raise anything or for their homes. Did they have some kind of water allotment through the project?*

Yes. They had a water allotment very similar to whatever the other farmers had, depending upon their acreage and if they were registered as a quote "farm" then they got water in the irrigation ditches just like here.

*Did any of them farm?*

Oh, yes.

*Oh, they did?*

Oh, yes. All of our neighbors surrounding us or neighboring to us, they all farmed.

*I mean the Indians.*

Yes.

*Oh, yes they did. Oh, that's interesting. And I know that you mentioned it, many of them worked on the ranches or in the homes.*

Many Indians worked for my father in the haying fields. And then when we were very small, there were Indian ladies that

came to help mom. They would help do the laundry and the cooking and probably even watched Maie and I when we were really tiny. [laughter] But yes, they worked . . . I can't remember a summer during the hay season that we didn't have Indians working here.

*So they were able to make a decent living . . . a liveable living.*

If they wanted to.

*If they wanted to, yes.*

They could farm or they could work out. And they were good workers. My father preferred them to the white people that you go and get from an employment service.

*And so a lot of the ranchers hired them.*

Yes. Oh, yes. My mother used to say she preferred them because they had so much better table manners. [laughter]

*I want to go back to the Indian Baptist mission and missionaries. When did that start, do you know?*

I think it started in the mid-twenties. I can't say for sure just when it started. In fact, I would like to do a story on that, but I just haven't had the time to do research. But I think they started in the twenties.

*Were they the only religious missionary coming to the Stillwater Indian Reservation or were there others?*

As far as I know, they were just the Baptist missionaries.

*Now, did they build their own church there?*

Yes, I believe so.

*Was it there when you were a little girl? Was it already there?*

Yes. Yes.

*It was built before you were born?*

Yes, it was already there.

*And was there a rotation of missionaries?*

Yes.

*So that like our Mormon center in San Diego where every year or two another couple is sent?*

I'm not sure just what the period of time was, but yes. Maybe it wasn't on a set period of time, you know. A lot of people didn't ever want to come West and so they might take it on for a year or two. But if they got to like the West, then they might want to stay longer.

*Yes. Now, where did they live? I know you said they boarded here. Where did they stay?*

They lived in the mission itself. In the building.

*So the mission was more than a church.*

Yes. I think they had a couple of rooms. Not very much.

*Was there a mission school?*

No.

*No. So the school was the regular government school? Was there a separate school for the Indians on the reservation?*

With the lower grades there was for a while. But then eventually all of the kids were integrated into the Churchill County school system.

*Oh, do you know what year that was?*

No, I'm sorry I can't answer that.

*No. But was it when you were in elementary school, did you have Indian children in your classes?*

Well, in our elementary school, we didn't have Indian children in our classes. But I don't know if that's because of the distance or the fact that they already had that Indian school on the reservation.

*OK. Yes. Did you have Indian students in your junior high?*

We didn't have a junior high.

*Oh, your high school then.*

Yes.

Yes, by then.

And they were good athletes, you know.

*Now, back to the missionaries and when they came to eat, so you got pretty well acquainted. Where were some of the places they came from and tell me a little bit about the people.*

Well, the two I can remember the most clearly was a Ms. Teeter . . . Mary Teeter that came from Kansas. And I think she was from Topeka. And the other lady was from North Dakota and I can't think of what her first name was, but we called her Ms. Briar.

And I remember them the most clearly. There was a lady that preceded them and then she married a Fallon farmer and that was a Mrs. DeArmand. But I can't recall right now what her maiden name was.

*Now, were these usually women?*

As far as I know, they were all women.

*Were they ordained?*

I don't believe so.

*So that the services weren't where certain ceremonies were performed?*

I can't really answer that.

*But you went to the services?*

Used to go to Sunday school.

*Oh, Sunday school. I see, so maybe there were more teachers than ministers?*

No, I think they were the only two.

*Would there be two at a time, two women a time?*

As far as I know, there were two women.

*And about how many children were in your Sunday school class?*

Well, we really didn't have a Sunday school class. We went to the regular church services, but we called it Sunday school.

*Oh, OK. But it was a service.*

Yes.

*And did both women participate in reading the service?*

Yes.

*About how many attended these services? I know you were the only quote-unquote "white ones." Well, you say you went . . . how many of your family went?*

Usually just the kids. Neither my mother nor father were very oriented towards religion even though they came from religious families.

*But they wanted to introduce you children to it?*

Yes. They at least wanted us to know what Sunday school was about and what religious services were about. And I really can't remember how we got there, whether we walked or went in a buggy, but I can remember being there and, you know . . .

*Was it crowded? Was the room filled with people?*

Yes. The room was filled. There were probably maybe sixty-seventy people there.

*Did they serve refreshments after or did you have time to talk?*

Not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge.

*That's very interesting. And are they still functioning? Are they still there?*

No.

*They're not?*

No. I'm not sure whether they have Sunday services anymore. They have a nice church down there, but to my knowledge, they use it more for funerals than anything else. And if they have Sunday services there, I'm not aware of it.

*And so about when did the visits of the missionaries end or when did they stop boarding at your house? What time period?*

Oh, I would think it was in the late thirties.

Oh, OK. So it wasn't very long.

No.

*Maybe ten years?*

Twenty, I'd say.

*Twenty years. Let's stay with the Indian reservation since we're there. Take me through the changes when HUD started and what changes developed on the reservation and the Head Start and whatever other developments have occurred.*

Well, somewhere in that period of time before HUD came on board, I think, they finally got themselves together as a tribal council. And I would think that maybe happened in the forties, maybe right after the war.

*Did they have some government agent to lead them?*

Yes. And then they elected their tribal officers and the tribal officers, to this day, make the decisions on how they're going to spend their tribal monies and what other things

they're going to do . . . what programs they're going to have. And of course, they oversee the HUD office and the Head Start office and all the different entities that are down there.

*Is that all on the reservation?*

Yes.

*And is there an election of the tribal council?*

Yes.

*So that it's a democratic procedure?*

Yes.

*And you said the population has increased because of the benefits of living there.*

I believe it has.

*And did you observe when the houses started being built?*

Well, I can only relate it to the Indian lady that worked for my mother, Allie Williams. At that time I was living in Reno, but I would come home on weekends. And it was probably in the sixties.

*Oh, that late?*

When HUD started. And I remember her telling about how many hours she had to put in to get her house. And she did painting and she did light carpenter work and things that any amateur can do.

*And did they have to apply?*

Yes, I believe so.

*Or at least show a need. So that's been a big improvement. Do you have any idea how many houses there are now?*

You're talking about HUD housing?

*Yes, the kind that went up after the sixties.*

Oh, there must be between a hundred and a hundred and fifty.

*Now, beside the HUD housing have others built their own homes or are the homes that you see that are real houses all through the HUD?*

Mostly through HUD.

*Are there still some of the smaller places for people who didn't want to get involved with building a house. Are there still some of those?*

Very few. And there are still shacks.

*Shacks. OK. And have there been problems on the reservation with alcohol or drugs?*

Well, they've had a terrible problem with alcohol as long as I can remember. Before they were allowed to have alcohol, I can remember, you know, sitting in the car waiting for Mom to come out of a store or something and a white man would put a bag of something in the doorway of a building that, you know, wasn't being operated at the time. And then pretty soon an Indian man would come and pick that bag up and we knew that it was a bottle of whiskey or whatever.

*Oh, they were introducing liquor to the Indians.*

Oh, yes. But the Indians probably paid him extra to go get the liquor and then . . .

*Because they weren't allowed to buy it? So it was just like prohibition, they weren't allowed, but they got it through other means.*

Yes, right. Yes.

*I see.*

And so there's always been a problem with some Indians having alcohol. And unfortunately, I think it goes to this day that the ones that do drink seem to get into fights more often and can never stay employed.

*That's too bad.*

It is.

*Is there a drug/alcohol . . . AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] organization there? I know many reservations do set up something.*

I'm not aware that there's one on the reservation, but I know the son of the Indian lady that worked for my mother, he used to go to AA in Fallon, but I don't know whether it ever proved successful for him. I don't believe so. And whether that's because he felt out of place with a predominantly white group or what, I don't know.

*Now they go to the regular schools in Fallon. Is there a special bus or is there a bus that comes out this way to pick up all the kids, including the Indian children?*

Yes. Yes. One goes right by our place every day . . . every school day.

*Yes. So that's interesting that they're all integrated now.*

Yes. Well, even when we went to high school, the Indian students rode our bus.

*Beside the integration in the school, did the Indian . . . and I'm going to say white . . . Indian and white kids play together and socialize outside of school or did the Indian kids go home to their reservation and you went back to your own homes?*

Primarily that's what happened. There were two reasons for that, I think. First of all, the Indian kids had to go to school on a bus because their parents didn't have a lot of means of transportation. So you didn't linger after school and buddy around with kids. We didn't ourselves. We couldn't take in the extracurricular athletic things because we had to get the bus to come home. So that was one of the reasons there wasn't this interaction after school.

*Sure. Sure. It's understandable, the situation.*

Right.

*You're not just running around the block. Before we leave the reservation and the Indians, is there anything else to add to that?*

Well, I'd like to give a couple of remembrances, my first remembrances of the Indians. One of them was . . . I would be maybe seven or eight years old and my mother would say, "Go see what Bessie wants," or "Go see what Maggie wants." And Maggie or Bessie would be out squatting under one of these locust trees here. And she'd just sit there. She wouldn't come and knock on the door or anything.

*How far was that tree?*

Just over there.

*Just right over there. Just a stone's throw from the kitchen.*

Yes. Probably fifty feet. And that would be the first time I'd be aware there was an Indian lady out there. [laughter] And so I'd go out and see what Bessie or Maggie wanted, whoever it was, and she would hold out her little hand and she would want bread or milk. Usually they used milk to treat their eyes.

*Oh. Did she tell you what she wanted?*

She could tell me what she wanted. And so then I'd come and tell Mom. And Mom used to bake bread so they could buy, you know, a slice or two or a loaf or whatever. And when I took it back out to them, the little Indian lady would untie the coin out of the corner of her handkerchief to pay for it! [laughter] And I always thought it was so . . .

*How sweet.*

Yes.

*How cute.*

You know, it was just so remarkable. They'd just come and sit and wait.

*Now, I know you were little so it's hard to tell age. About how old a woman would this be?*

Well, they looked terribly old, but they were probably forty or fifty years old.

*Maybe the mother of a family?*

Oh, yes.

*And so would it usually be bread or milk?*

That's what I remember.

*And how many, two that you mainly remember?*



Well, you mean the two Indian ladies?

Yes.

Oh, there were more, but . . . .

*That's representative.*

That's representative, yes.

*And your mother was kind and . . . .*

Oh, my mother, she had a great sympathy for them. Well, any woman would have sympathy for another woman that had to put up with the hardships of ranch life.

*Yes. But a lot of women wouldn't have sympathy if they didn't feel kindly towards the Indians.*

Oh, yes.

*So that was very nice.*

Yes.

*So they knew they could come?*

Yes.

*They knew. Maybe not every ranch, but they knew they could come to yours.*

The men that were close by, when it was irrigation time and they had to get in touch with the ditch rider, they'd always come up here and ask Mom to phone the ditch rider and ask for the water or tell them that it's time to shut it off.

*Because they didn't have phones.*

No, they didn't have phones. So they felt, I think, comfortable coming here.

Yes. Yes.

The other thing that I remember that I want to describe is when an Indian died or when they went to town shopping, they would be in a four-wheeled wagon-cart. And always the men were sitting up on the driver's seat driving and the Indian ladies would be sitting at the rear end of the wagon. And there would be a dog running under the wagon in the shade. [laughter]

*That's a vivid picture.*

Yes. Almost always.

*Were there little kids there in the wagon?*

Yes, sometimes there were.

*Did the mothers when they had their babies, carry them in a wrap on their back or did they . . . .*

Yes. They carried them in a cradle board.

*Oh, in the cradle board.*

They all had cradle boards.

*Are there any pictures, photographs?*

I think there might be one in the album, I don't know if it's Mom or an Indian lady showing the cradle board on the back. It's hard to tell. And then if there was a death in the family, a funeral, the same kind of a procession would happen with the dog running under the cart. [laughter] But then

the women would be wailing all the way . . . all the way to the cemetery which was two or three miles from here.

*How many vehicles would there be?*

Oh, just maybe one.

*Just one with the women. There might be more . . . maybe a child?*

But they would be making these terrible wailing sounds.

*Oh, oh my! Oh, gee! When you were little, did it frighten you when you were little?*

No, it didn't frighten me, but . . . you know, I'll never forget it. We always knew when somebody died.

*Anything more on that . . . on the Indian reservation?*

No.

*It's been very interesting and it's new information. Now we're going to go to Lahontan Dam and from your earliest memories, whether it was picnics that you went to or when you first saw the dam itself, which I think is such a beautiful structure there. Tell me about these experiences.*

Primarily we went up there on a picnic. And we would, you know, have our picnic lunch on that beach or if it was really, really hot, then we'd go down into what they call a picnic area which is below the dam on the east side and there were shade trees there and you could, you know, sit under the shade and have your picnic. And at the time, there were

what they would call beach houses, I guess. They were rooms where people could go change their clothing into swimsuits and out of swimsuits. And those all went by the wayside, probably about the time of World War II.

*So when you were a child, that's what it was like? Was that swimming in what looks like a lake there?*

Yes.

*That's before the recreation area was developed.*

Yes. But it was just the water backed up behind the dam. There were no special facilities or anything.

*Was it fun to look at that huge and I think quite beautiful structure here.*

Oh, yes. You're familiar with the structure, so all of those steps that go from the top bridge all the way down, oh, that used to be a lot of fun to run up and down those. [laughter]

*Did you cross that beautiful bridge? To me it looks almost like an European bridge.*

Yes.

*Did it seem kind of special to a child.*

Well, I don't . . .

*You just took it for granted.*

Yes, I think we took it for granted, you know. We didn't know any better.

*But was it exciting when somebody would say "Let's go to the dam"?*

Yes. And it didn't happen very often, you know.

*Kind of far, actually.*

Yes. It's sixteen miles from Fallon and it's nine miles from here to Fallon. So it was a twenty-five mile one-way trip.

*Was it dirt roads then . . . gravel and dirt or . . . ?*

No, the roads were paved.

*When did your family get an automobile? Since you can remember, did they have one?*

Yes, since as long as I can remember, they had an automobile. One was a Durant and then they had a Buick. And I can remember riding in the Durant with, you know, no covered doors, right out in the broad wind. And oh, that car was a noisy car! But we enjoyed it.

*Would it be holidays when you'd go to the dam?*

Usually.

*Some special holiday?*

Some special occasion, yes.

*And would there be other families at the dam?*

Yes.

*That sounds like fun. Would your dad go on these outings?*

Almost always.

*All of you?*

Yes. Usually it was on a Sunday and my father and mother were very friendly with Alec and Bonita Baumann and almost every time we went somewhere, we went together as a group.

*Oh. A couple of cars.*

Yes. Well, in Nevada it's always good to have two cars in case one breaks down. [laughter]

*What kind of food would you have on a picnic?*

Usually sandwiches. Once in a while Mom would fry up some chicken and we'd have potato salad as a rule. We all liked that. And in the summertime, watermelon.

*Mmm, that sounds good. Cantaloupe?*

Yes, cantaloupe.

*That sounds like a lot of fun.*

Yes.

*When the recreation center was created at Lahontan dam in connection with the State Park and Recreation, you weren't living here full-time, but when you came home, did you ever go there?*

No. The only time I've been there since I got home was when they had a seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the dedication of the dam. So we went up for that.

*Do you know if that recreation center is used much?*

I think it's used a lot by campers and I think a lot by . . .

*Boating . . . there's boating.*

Yes, boating. And a lot by people travelling through in their camping rigs.

*So anything more on that part of the dam before we move on?*

No, I don't think so.

*Now, did you ever go arrowhead hunting since you live in Indian country?*

Yes, I'm sorry to say we did. We were like everyone else. We went arrowhead hunting. That was one of our main Sunday recreations.

*And tell me, where would you go?*

We'd go east of here down on the Carson Sinks. And again, it would be usually the Baumann family and our family. And we always had a picnic lunch of sandwiches or fried chicken or something like that. And in those days, cars had running boards, so when we went arrowhead hunting, usually Mom would drive, Dad would be out looking for arrowheads. But we'd ride on the running boards until we thought we saw an arrowhead.

*Oh, my goodness!*

And then we'd jump off and go pick up the arrowhead or whatever it was. And then we'd have to run to catch up with the car again.

*Oh, my goodness! Are there pictures of your arrowhead hunting days?*

I imagine we have a few.

*Now, so that means, the way you're describing it, the arrowheads were above ground. You didn't have to dig.*

No. No. They'd just lay flat on the ground.

*So you would just see them.*

And on one Sunday, you might see an arrowhead and you'd pick it up, you wouldn't see anything else. On another Sunday, maybe three or four weeks later, if the wind had blown, there might be some more arrowheads right in that same spot that had been uncovered because of the wind.

*So does that mean they were doing a whole lot of hunting with the arrowheads?*

I think so.

*So you'd go to areas where there might have been the hunting grounds.*

Right.

*Or did word get around where they were?*

No. I think there were hunting grounds all over, but there were also campsites where they would quote "make the arrowheads" and in those areas you'd find a lot of arrowhead chips because if they were making an arrowhead and the thing broke, then they'd throw it away.

*I see. Were these arrowheads from earlier days when they were using them to hunt or were some being made so they could sell them?*

Oh, no. Just to hunt.

*They were all the regular, authentic?*

Right. Right.

*And what did you do with all of those arrowheads?*

I have them here in a box.

*Oh, I want to take a picture of you with them, that would be fascinating. What other kind of recreational outings did your family enjoy?*

Well, every fall, we'd go pine nutting and collect pine nuts. Actually, we collected the cones and would bring them home and then knocked the pine nuts out of the cones once we got them home. And that usually happened in late September or early October, depending upon when the frost hit up in the mountains.

*Where would you go to collect these pine cones?*

Well, we primarily went out in the East Gate area. Probably because it was very convenient and accessible. And we would go and Dad and Mr. Baumann would knock the cones off the trees with a stick and then we'd pick them up and put them in gunny sacks and bring them home. And then we'd take them out of the cones. Of course, the cones made good burning material. And then we'd have the pine nuts to eat and/or roast. And they were one of our sources of snack food.

*Yes, it's kind of gourmet. You pay a fortune today for pine nuts where I live. [laughter]*

That's right. Well, if you had to pick them, you'd want a fortune. [laughter]

*Is it easy to get the nuts out of the cone?*

If the cone is opened and it usually doesn't open until after the frost.

*I see. OK.*

So, that's the main thing. If the cone is closed, you can't hardly get those nuts out. But if it's opened, then all you have to do is kind of bang them against your hand or against a box or something and they'll fall out.

*Oh. Oh. Sounds like a lot of fun with your family doing that together.*

Oh, well, it was. It was.

*How old were you when you stopped doing that?*

Probably when I started going to college.

*Oh, so you did that all the time you were living at home. And it would still be your family and the Baumann's. Did you ever take friends along, too, or was there not enough space?*

Well, primarily there'd be just our family and the Baumann family. But, you know, part of that is because the valley wasn't that heavily settled and your neighbors were far apart. And so you didn't tend to communicate with a lot of people. The only time that that was different was one of my mother's and father's big recreations was playing cards and they played a game called "Five hundred."

*Who did they play with?*

Well, there is where they had lots of different friends come in and play. And primarily, they were mostly Scandinavian and I don't know if that's because the Scandinavians like to play that game or what.

*Well, that means there were Scandinavian homesteaders.*

Oh, yes. Plenty.

*So during that period that you can remember, was there . . . of course, by the time you were born, the homesteading was starting to end, wasn't it?*

Yes.

*Yes. So they were already here when . . . ?*

Yes.

*So you didn't observe the coming in of that early period.*

No. No.

*And it was pretty well settled.*

Almost all of the farms were settled by then.

*I want to get back a little bit to crops and some of the things that were happening now that the water was coming in from the Newlands project. Did your father raise any of the Hearts-O-Gold cantaloupe and get into that industry?*

Not as a commercial aspect. We raised Hearts-O-Gold just for our own use for eating. But I don't recall that he ever raised them to sell.

*It would be like you raised your own vegetable garden.*

Right.

*You'd raise the fruit.*

We raised everything.

*And did you try the beets when they were trying to promote the production of beets for sugar?*

Well, that was before my time.

Oh, OK.

I really can't say whether Dad did or not.

*He didn't talk about it?*

No.

*So maybe he didn't . . .*

No. No. My earliest recollection about the sugar beet industry was every once in a while we'd go up to that quote "sugar beet factory" which is already closed and deteriorating from lack of use. Windows were broken. Birds were flying in and out.

*Oh, my goodness. [laughs]*

Yes. It was too bad because it was, you know, a nice building, but it was just desecrated like so many buildings are once they're abandoned.

*With the years moving along through your childhood into your teens before you left for college, were there changes in the kinds of crops that were on your ranch, in the trees or gardens or animals? Any changes over that time that were worthy to note?*

Well, as we got older, we entirely got out of having our own milk cows.

*Why was that?*



That's a good question. I just don't think we felt like we had the need for milk as much as we did. Mom used to make cottage cheese and of course, we all drank milk. And then it got easier to buy cottage cheese. And beef cattle brought in better money than milk or milk products did. So eventually, we got rid of all the milk cows and Dad bought the Black Angus animals, both cows and bulls, and started to raise beef cattle. And the crops, primarily, I think they're the same . . . that I can remember, they've always been alfalfa, wheat, corn, barley . . . those are primarily the crops.

*Back to the cows. Was one of the reasons possibly that you had to start pasteurizing and more rigid health rules?*

I'm sure. I'm sure of that. You had to be so much more careful and you had to have quote "up-to-date" equipment. And I think Dad didn't feel like it was worth it. And my brother just hated milking cows, so he didn't want anything to do with that. [laughter]

*That was labor-intensive yet. Right. Now, did you keep the cattle and the bulls here on your property or did you use any grazing lands?*

No, here on this ranch property.

*And then you raised the feed for them?*

Yes.

*And were there any changes in the irrigation or in the supply of water? Any changes in the regulations?*

Well, I think there's been quite a few changes. Well, I think as a small child and I . . . you know, I didn't do the irrigating,

so I really can't be authentic on this, but farmers didn't have to worry too much about how much water they used. They were only allotted so much, but they never seemed to have a problem with needing water. Now the drought years have come along and everybody has to cut back on the water. The biggest improvement in saving the water, I think and probably other ranchers would say the same thing, is what they call laser levelling.

*What does that mean?*

Well, in the old days, every farmer if he had to level a field that he was going to put a crop in, he had to kind of eyeball it. Nowadays they have a machine that has a laser instrument on it and that laser instrument is attached onto the levelling equipment. And the farmer will sit in the tractor and pull that levelling equipment, and the laser through electronic signalling will automatically level the land to the point where . . . well, in irrigation you want your land where the water first comes out of the ditch just slightly higher than the end of the field so the water will flow downhill. So the laser machine achieved that so that the water doesn't puddle anyplace. It's just all level and it'll go down the field evenly.

*Does that mean you know where to build your ditches . . . dig your ditches?*

The ditches are pretty well in place. You don't go around changing those ditches very much. But it saves you water because if the land is not level or doesn't slope enough, it takes longer to irrigate or the water will puddle in a part of the field. And if it does that, then it will burn your crop.

*OK. So it tells you how much water is needed at each part of the ground. You're the first one to tell about this.*

[laughs] Oh, I'm not the expert.

*No. You're just the first one to tell about that. Did the cementing of the canals and ditches also help by preventing the water soaking into the ground. Did that help with the supply after the CCC came?*

Well, yes. After the CCC came and they put up cement, concrete structures. That helped with controlling the water because the wooden structures weren't as leak-proof. I've heard good and bad about cementing the ditches. It does save water, but I've also heard that during the wintertime when there is freezing action going on and the ground tends to move up and down, those concrete ditches will break. And then you've got a leakage problem. So I think there is good and bad about concrete ditches.

*And were there drought times before this recent long drought, were there times before that where there would be difficult years or is it only in this last decade?*

Yes. If there were some before that, I don't recall it. And I don't recall my father ever talking about a drought time.

*Or a hardship in getting water?*

No. No.

*Did they, over those years, raise the cost of the water because of any improvements to each rancher?*

I believe so. Yes. They've increased just because of operating costs, you know. They

have to pay salaries and like you say, do improvements. And that cost has to be passed on to the water user.

*We're going to go to more current issues before we end the interview, but in that period before you went to college, anything else along the irrigation, crops, the cattle on the ranch . . . oh, did your father ever raise bees?*

Oh, yes.

OK.

He raised bees . . .

*Because I know that was his intent when he first came.*

Well, I don't know if he intended to get into the bee business, but he had a hobby of bees back in Minnesota where he lived. And so I think he always wanted to have bees around. And bees are good to pollinate the crops. So you do two things, you pollinate your crops, then you get some honey and you can sell the honey. But he got really involved in it and got into the honey business in a big way, I would say the late thirties, mid-thirties.

*Oh, that early.*

Yes. Until his health started to fail and my brother took over the honey business.

*Let's go back to that earlier period. When you can remember as a child, how big of a bee industry was it? About how many hives? Where was it located? Can you remember?*

I really can't tell you how many hives. He would have what he would call a bee yard . . . yards of bees on this place.

*Where would it be on this place? Can you remember at all?*

Yes, it's just south of the house about, oh, probably an eighth of a mile. And then he would also put bees on some of his neighbors fields.

*Oh, just to pollinate different kinds of crops.*

Right, pollinate other crops. And they were happy to have them because they would pollinate their crops for them. And so he didn't just limit it to this property, but he had what he called bee yards around several different ranches.

*And then did he start to sell the honey?*

Yes.

*Who did he sell it to?*

He sold it to the grocery stores. One of his biggest buyers was a grocery store chain by the name of Sewells.

*Were they here or here in Fallon or . . . ?*

Reno. No, Reno.

*Oh, in Reno. So sold it . . . would he put it in jars or just in bulk or what?*

He would put it in jars and in five pound cans.

*Oh, isn't that interesting? So that was another facet of his ranching.*

Oh, yes. Yes.

*Did he handle that with your brother?*

Well, he was doing it before my brother was old enough to take the business over. Yes.

*He was the one who took care of all that.*

Oh, yes.

*And is that what introduced your brother to the bee industry?*

Yes. We all got introduced to it very young. [laughter] I can remember having to paint beehives.

*Oh, did you ever get bitten.*

Oh, yes. Stung.

*Stung. Stung. Were you allergic to them or . . . ?*

I wasn't, but our brother, Ray, was terribly allergic and he couldn't be around the bees.

*Oh, my! So which brother is it that's . . . ?*

Earl.

*And did he take to it?*

Apparently he did. I guess it worked out that way. Earl had a bad case of hay fever. Every year he suffered when haying season came along. And so he didn't want to farm, but he didn't mind the bee business.

*OK. He wasn't allergic to bees?*

No.

*Good.*

We all worked with the bees.

*Oh, isn't that interesting.*

When we were kids. Besides painting the hives, we would help during extracting time.

*Really?*

Yes. And Earl would cut the outer wall of wax off of the bee frame and we would put the bee frames into the extractor. First we'd crank it by hand and then later Dad got one that was motorized. And we would put the frames in and the honey would be extracted by centrifugal force. And then we'd take those frames out and put them back into that particular beehive. And we did that all day long.

*Oh, you had lots of experiences that very few people have. [laughter]*

And then we used to fill the jars and the honey can . . . used to stick the labels on the jars and the honey cans, too.

*Oh, how wonderful. Now you said the labels, who created the labels? Did your Dad design it?*

Yes, I think my father primarily . . . he may have had some assistance from the company he finally purchased the labels from, but I think he designed it primarily.

*He was very innovative and had many talents, didn't he?*

Oh, he was. Yes, he was a very innovative man and very curious.

*Isn't that wonderful? So he added a lot to all of your lives, your education, your understanding.*  
Yes.

A lot to our education. There wasn't hardly a weekend if we didn't go arrowhead hunting, we went someplace. We'd go visit Virginia City or we'd go visit Fort Churchill.

*Was he the one who initiated these outings?*

Well, in a way. You know, he was the driver and he knew how much time he had. So he would kind of . . . well, once in a while he would say to us, "Well, where will we go *this* weekend, kids?" But a lot of times he had it in his mind already where we were going to go.

*So he always probably looked forward to these weekends.*

I think so. That was his day off.

*Yes. And it also showed how he loved to be with his family.*

Yes.

*That's wonderful.*

Yes, he was very interested in everything and he made sure all of kids were involved in everything so that we did learn. We learned a lot.

*Yes. Now, you said until he started to get ill, when did he start to slow down or get ill?*

In the early sixties.

*The early sixties. What was happening?*

He used to get just minor strokes. You wouldn't hardly know he was having a stroke unless you could observe him closely. But they just kept coming more often. And pretty soon he had a stroke bad enough it disabled one of

his legs. So he had to limp a lot. He just went downhill from that.

*When was he unable to take care of the ranch and I suppose your brothers took over.*

Yes, I think Ray took over the ranching part pretty much after World War II after he came out of the army. And of course, Dad's love was the honey business, so he didn't mind that Ray took over the ranching part.

*He still took care of the honey and was still able to do that?*

Oh, yes. Yes. One of Ray's stipulations was that if he was going to farm, he wanted to have a tractor. Ray wasn't really fond of horses and cows. [laughter]

*Oh, he wasn't.*

So Dad bought a tractor. And of course, I don't ever remember seeing my father on that tractor, but Ray started doing all of the farming with the tractor.

*And when did your father die? How old were you when he died?*

I'm sorry. I can't remember, but I think it was around 1967-'68.

*That must have been hard. Was he at home the whole time?*

No, he was in the nursing home probably the last six months of his life.

*And was your mother fine and able to stay and take care of things in the house?*

Yes.

*Now, before we get into your college years, is there anything more about your high school years that you want to tell us?*

No. I can't think of anything quote "spectacular" but one of the major things we used to do at that time and I don't know if the kids do it anymore, is on Saturday nights our primary source of entertainment or means of entertainment was dancing. And we used to . . . almost every weekend, especially in the summertime, they would have public dances at the Fraternal Hall.

*What's the Fraternal Hall?*

Well, the Fraternal Hall is a building. It's downtown on Maine Street. And it was built through membership subscription to this organization. And I think that the "Fraternal" came from the fact that several different fraternal organizations used it as their meeting place.

*I see. Like the Elks, and the Masons and . . .*

And the Eagles.

*So they'd all paid to . . .*

Apparently. I think they paid and rented it out . . . you know, I don't know how they shared in the rental, but I think they rented it out and kept the building up. I don't think it was primarily a profit making thing. But it was used by the community.

*What kind of music for the dances? Were there live bands?*

Live bands.

Yes.

And in those days, you didn't necessarily have to go with a date. In fact, I can remember, never did go with a date during the high school days to the Fraternal Hall. We'd go with our brother and the Baumann girls.

*Who would drive you in?*

Our older brother Ray. And then we'd stay at the dances until two or three in the morning.

*What kind of dances were they dancing then?*

Oh, I don't know what they call them. Fox-trot or . . . .

*Was it ballroom?*

Oh, yes.

*Was there also square dancing?*

No, not square dancing. Ballroom dancing.

*Only ballroom dancing. Did they do fast dances?*

I think the one in those days was called the Shag.

*Oh, the Shag. OK.*

And then waltzes, of course. And the regular two steps.

*That sounds like a lot of fun.*

Oh, it was. It was very nice.

*Did they have chaperons?*

No.

*They didn't have to in those days.*

Well, yes. Right. They had everybody chaperoning.

*There was no alcohol there.*

No. If somebody wanted to drink, they had to go downstairs and across the street to one of the bars. But, you know, the dancing area was lined along the walls with chairs. And if you weren't dancing, you were sitting on those chairs and you were either watching the dancers or you were visiting with whoever you were sitting near.

*Were there refreshments?*

Not as a rule.

*Was it allowable for the girls to ask the fellows to dance in those days or did you have to wait for a fellow to ask you?*

Well, as far as I know, everyone waited for a fellow to ask her.

*Were there many wallflowers?*

No, I don't think so.

*It was all sociable people.*

Yes.

*People came who knew others and . . . .*

Lots of fellows came without dates so they'd go ask a girl who was sitting singly or with others and ask them for a dance.

*How did people dress for those dances?*



Oh, just informal. The girls would dress informally with cotton dresses or taffeta dresses. The fellows usually had on slacks and a shirt and a tie and sometimes not a tie.

*And so they didn't come in their Levi's?*

No.

*Or shorts?*

Not as a rule. [laughter] Not like you do now.

*Are there any pictures of those dances?*

I don't think I have any.

*Yes. I'd love to see that. So before we move to your college days, anything else in that time period as you were going through high school, where your brothers and all of you were still at home. And I know that you always knew, because of your mother and I'm sure your father, that you were going to attend a university.*

Yes.

*So now I want to come to the point where you had decided where you were going and then when you leave for college.*

[laughs] Well, we didn't have much of a decision to make. You know, Mom and Dad could only afford to send us to the state university. You know, they couldn't afford out-of-state tuition to some other place. And we roomed in a dormitory up on the campus.

*Did you both go together? Let's take you from when you were getting ready to leave from your*

*house, or even before you went, did you go to the university and register? Did you arrange your housing? How did you make that big move?*

Well, I think we arranged the housing before we got up there and I really can't recall just how that did occur. Maie, Ray, and I all went to college together. And we all went up in a car. Ray did the driving.

*Were you all starting? Was Ray also starting the same time?*

Yes, he was starting the same. Yes.

*Because he stayed on the ranch? He's older than you?*

Yes. He stayed on the ranch and then he had to serve in the army. Most of his time in the army was after the war because during the war, he was excused or whatever word they use because he was a farmer and they needed the farmers to grow food. So he was exempt from the immediate wartime. And then once other people started coming back and there were people available to work on a farm, then he put in his military time.

*So what year was it when you all were leaving for college . . . the three of you?*

It would be the fall of 1942.

*So three of you absented together, how did your mom feel about that? [laughter]*

Well, I think she thought she had an empty house. She was always glad to see us. And of course, Dad was, too. They were both happy to have us come home on a weekend. But, you know, as it is with all families, I think, as you get involved in college activities.....

*You don't want to come home.*

You don't come home as often. So by springtime, you know, they probably felt lucky if we got home once a month or once every two months.

*So you all went together. And did you room with Maie?*

Maie and I shared a room in the dormitory.

*In the dorm. And did Ray stay in the dorm?*

Yes, he stayed in the men's dorm.

*So that made life a little easier.*

Yes. In those days they didn't have co-ed dorms. They had dorms for men and dorms for women.

*That sounds pretty proper. [laughter]*

Yes.

*So although we don't want to go into great detail, give us an overview of your years at the University of Nevada and then we'll talk about your visits home. Just what your major was and what you were doing there.*

Well, Maie and I both majored in home economics, but my special major was in dietetics whereas Maie's was in education. The first couple years of our schooling was pretty similar. We were both in the same classes like chemistry and physics and English and history and those things. But as we got into the last two years, her concentration was in education and mine was in nutrition and dietetics. So the last couple of years we hardly were in the same classes. We came

home as often as we could, but as I said, when springtime came along, you got involved with all kinds of activities.

*Were there any changes on your trips home?*

If you're talking about changes on the ranch . . .

*On the ranch.*

No.

*Or the house.*

No.

*Things were moving along . . .*

Pretty much the same.

*And what would you do in the summer?*

Well, primarily help Mom with the cooking and the washing.

*So you'd come home?*

Yes.

*You and Maie and Ray, all of you come home?*

Right. But, you know, we still had haying going on so we had to cook for ten or fifteen men.

*Oh, my goodness! So that's where your nutrition and dietetics, . . . both of your majors helped, right? [laughter]*

Yes. And of course, they didn't have automatic laundry machines like they do now, so we spent, you know, at least a day washing clothes every week.

*What did she do when you weren't here? Did she hire some of the Indian women to help?*

Yes. We had this one Indian lady. Her name . . . and I've mentioned it before, was Allie Williams. And she came to work for Mom and Dad when we went off to college. I remember Mom telling about how she came and wanted to work. And at first, Mom thought she could use her a day or two. Well, pretty soon, Dad was using her to help with the honey business as well as in the house. So she worked for the family for forty years.

*Oh my goodness! So when you would come home summers, would you be eager to go back to college?*

Well, I think after we got rested up and felt renewed, then we were ready to go back to college.

*And how many years were you at the University of Nevada, Reno?*

Four years. Each of us were there four years.

*So what was your decision then? Did you take a job then?*

No. I entered into a dietary internship at the University of Minnesota hospitals in Minneapolis.

*What made you pick Minneapolis? [laughter]*

Well, it would have been the first time I was ever away from home for a year. And I thought, "Well, you know, I might get homesick." Well, we had relatives in Minnesota. Not in Minneapolis, but in Minnesota. And I thought, "Well, if I start

to get homesick, I can go visit some of the relatives."

*Was it also a good school that had been recommended?*

Oh, excellent. Excellent.

*So there were a couple of reasons. And so tell me just very briefly about that. How many years were you there?*

One year.

*One year. And did you stay there the whole year? Too expensive to come up and back.*

Well, I did get home for Christmas.

*And you went without Maie so this was your first big break without being with your twin.*

Well, in a way you can say that, yes. I guess you could say that's the first time we had ever really been separated for a long time.

*For that length of time. So you were both moving into your own, separate lives.*

Right.

*How did that feel when you first started that? Were you a little lonely for each other?*

No. I don't think we were.

OK. *You had already made the break.*

You know, in college you kind of make the break because some of your activities are the same, but lots of times your activities are different and you're socializing with different people. And so you start to make the break.

Probably we started to make the break in our sophomore year.

*You were your own individual. And any major changes in that one year when you came home?*

No. I don't think so. The big major change was it was, you know, right after the war. And cars were just getting available again, you know. But during the war, it was hard to get a car. Well, Dad needed a new pickup so since I was going to be coming home, he made arrangements to buy a pickup at the factory in Flint, Michigan, and I went back there and got it and drove home with one of my internship pals.

Wow!

All the way to Salt Lake City and then she left to go to Portland and I drove home.

*Oh, that's the first time you ever drove that long of a distance, right?*

Right.

*How did it feel? Were you confident?*

Oh, yes. You know, when you're a kid like that you can conquer the world. [laughter]

*Well, it shows your father had a lot of faith in you to do that.*

I guess.

*Now, that brings us into what I wanted to discuss next, the war period. You mentioned that through the war your brother didn't have to go, but we're going to stick with the war period. You were at college afterwards or during . . . ?*

During.

*How did it affect the ranch. I know you said you couldn't get cars. Were there other hardships. Could you get help?*

No. During the summertime, we not only helped in the house, but we helped in the haying. I used to ride the haywagon and load down the hay when the fellows pitched the hay onto the wagon. And I'd run the tractor when Ray levelled the land.

*Because you couldn't get this outside help.*

No.

*Now, did they draft the Indians?*

Yes.

*They did. So they were gone, too.*

The younger men were.

*The ones that would usually come and work for you were gone.*

Yes.

*And what other . . . were there shortages of things that you really needed like the gasoline and . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Of course, Dad didn't have too much problem getting gas because of the farming. He could get barrels of gas.

OK. *They made allowances for that.*

And when we came home to visit, he'd always tell us to tank up. But between the time we came home and came home again,

we had to watch our gas. And of course, we had gas stamps and we could buy gas in Reno, but, you know, you didn't go running around a lot with your car because you weren't going to have enough gas if you did.

*And especially you're kind of far here from the town.*

Yes.

*I mean it isn't like you could begin to walk.*

That's right.

*Or take a trolley. [laughter]*

Or catch a bus.

*Or catch a bus. Also, how was the community affected? Because I can imagine in a small community when everyone knows everyone, the morale with so many boys gone and so many deaths.*

I think the community was affected greatly by the deaths of the young men that got killed in the war. And in those days where everybody knew everybody, you grieved almost as much as the family grieved.

*Sure. It's so personalized. And it brought it back to us these recent days, you know.*

D-day plus fifty.

*Yes. Yes. So what other changes in the town because of the shortages and the hardships of hardly any young men around? Did it stop, of course, construction?*

Well, pretty much I think it stopped construction. You couldn't get the materials

and you couldn't get the labor to build anything. I can't really say that there was any problem with the roads or things like that. But at that time, the Navy base was starting to grow and more people were coming in. And of course, more sailors were around. I can remember my mother inviting Navy boys to come for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

*Oh, how interesting.*

And most every family tried to take in a serviceman.

*Oh, interesting.*

Or two or three depending upon how well off they are or how much room they had in their house. So I think the community was very supportive and friendly with the Navy fellows and tried to make them feel at home.

*Yes. Before I get to the airfield because that's next on my list, I want to also ask about the military young men coming in. During that period was it part of the same thing that it is now, with the flying or was it a different kind of Navy men coming in? At that time during the war, was the base used for another purpose?*

No, it was primarily for flying.

*Always for training and flying.*

Training flyers.

*And so we'll move along with the air base. I want to go back a little bit because when the air base was coming in and I'm sure you didn't have a choice to vote or anything, what was the feeling of the community when it was known*

*that they were going to build an air base here and what year was that?*

Well, I think the community really was happy about it because they thought that would be, you know, great for business. I'm sure the businessmen thought it was wonderful. And I don't think the local citizenry were concerned either. You know, at that time everybody was pretty patriotic. And they accepted the base with no problem. I can't remember just when that base started. It originally was an army base and then it closed down for a while and then they reactivated it as a Navy base. I guess I'd have to say I was in college about those times and I don't really recall just when it came in.

*We were talking about the patriotism so I did want to ask, I'm sure there were a lot of civilian activities going on to help the war effort here in town.*

Oh, yes.

*Can you tell of anything that you know of that was going on?*

Well, yes. The ladies, including myself, were asked to knit sweaters for the servicemen.

*Oh, really?*

And we *all* knit sweaters and then rolled bandages.

*Oh. Did they tell you what kinds of sweaters or just whatever you wanted or . . . ? Did they give you wool or did you buy your own?*

I think they gave us the wool and it was all kind of a khaki color like the military garb. I think there was a couple of patterns you could

knit. You could knit a sleeveless sweater or you could knit a regular sweater. But those were the only two that I could remember. But I can remember knitting a sweater for the military and I know Mom did. And I can also remember rolling bandages. Those are the two main things that I remember.

*Now as the airfield was being developed and the war had ended and it was actually in effect, was the community still as supportive? Because I understand some grazing land out near the Stillwater Mountains had to be taken back to the government for a flyover and it took away grazing lands from people like the Kents, for their sheep, I think.*

Well, I don't think that quote "government takeover" occurred until probably in the late sixties or early seventies.

OK. So that was much later.

And people at that time could not foresee that that was going to happen. And the reason it's happened is because of the improved jets that fly faster and need more space to maneuver because of their high speed.

*Yes. So . . . but at that time, the community all supported it?*

Yes. Well, and at that time the Navy didn't have to tell anybody what they were doing.

*Oh, that's right. During wartime it was secretive.*

Well, even after the war, they didn't have to have an environmental impact statement or a public hearing where people could give input into quote "what they were going to be doing." Nowadays they're supposed to do that, but I'm not sure they do it because it



seems to me that this move of the Top Gun squadron from San Diego [Miramar] up here was a cut and dried thing.

*You were just told after the fact?*

Yes. Several years ago. And then they come out with this phony environmental impact statement and hearing as if the public was going to have some input. My understanding is that was already plugged into the budget several years ago.

*Probably. I see.*

So I think the Navy talks out of both sides of its mouth.

*So then after the war, was there a bustle of activity to help the economy when construction would start again and fellows were coming home? What was it like after the war?*

Well, I think more construction was going. By then people could afford to buy materials to build a home. And get things like sinks and toilets and . . . .

*They all needed cars or tires and . . . .*

Yes. They could get those things so economically it was, I think, a real improvement both because the men coming home could be employed and there could be materials to do things with. This house was built in . . . well, I guess finished in 1951 . . . started in 1950. But Dad was ready to build a new house just before the war started.

*And that stopped because . . . .*

Yes. Because of the shortage of materials and the price went sky high, he just put it off until after the war.

*So it was in that period when you sold your house at a low price to the church when your house was finished.*

Yes.

*And then right after the war, did that help the ranch because more people here and was your father able to sell more cattle or did it have any upbeat affect for him?*

I'm not sure. I think maybe the cattle prices went up after that. But for his honey business, he was making a lot of money selling his beeswax for the military ammunition during the war. So when they didn't need munitions anymore, he didn't have an outlet for his beeswax. Well, he did have an outlet. He could sell it to candle makers.

*How did he learn that the military needed it? He just kept abreast with the bulletins and . . . ?*

Well, he subscribed to the *American Bee Journal* and I'm sure there were plenty of articles in there about the need for beeswax.

*I had never heard that. That's very interesting. So he was doing his share.*

It was going at a good price. Before beeswax was not totally a waste product, but, you know, you couldn't sell it for very much of a price just to make candles. But during the war, it *really* was valuable.

*Now, when the base came in, did the base buy any of their produce or cattle from the local ranchers?*

I really can't answer that, but I doubt it.

*So that didn't help with that part of the economy.*

I don't think so. The only thing is that when the base first came in like that, they didn't have a commissary so that the Navy people had to buy from the local stores or up in Reno. But now, and I don't know how long it's been in existence, but at least since the seventies sometime, they have a commissary. And the people don't always have to buy in Fallon.

*Especially commissaries are much cheaper.*

Oh, yes. And there's a lot of people that drive down from Reno to buy from this commissary here.

*Also, don't they sell gasoline much cheaper on the base? Has it helped the economy through . . . do many of them live off the base?*

Yes, quite a few, I think live off the base and . . .

*Rent or buy property.*

Rent or buy. Well, you see a lot of building going on now and part of that is because that the people that retire, especially from California, move to Nevada because the tax structure is so much better.

*And the lifestyle.*

Yes. And the lifestyle.

*Do a lot of the military retire here once they . . .*

Some of them do. I wouldn't say a lot, but we've got some people that came back from wherever they finished their military career to live in Fallon. Well, they like the lifestyle or they bought a home here and went off to finish their tour of duty somewhere else, but then came back because they had a home here.

*Because houses elsewhere are so expensive.*

Yes.

*After you came back from Minnesota from your education there and after the summer ended, what did you do then?*

Well, I went and applied for a job. [laughter] And luckily was hired at St. Mary's Hospital in Reno. One of the reasons I came back is because I like to ski. We got introduced to skiing when we were in college. When I went to Minnesota, I took my skis with me and the biggest hill they had was smaller than what I learned on. [laughter] So my skis stayed in the closet the whole time. So I decided that I wanted to come west again and get where I could ski.

*What year was it when you started with St. Mary's?*

1947.

*OK. Take us through that briefly. This time you went, you weren't living in dorms, so where did you live? [laughter]*

Well, I lived in a little kitchenette apartment that a lady had about two blocks from the hospital on Elm Street. Her name was Mrs. Angus.

*Is that the same spelling as the cattle?*

Yes. Yes. She lived upstairs and had her living quarters up there and I lived on the ground floor. And I stayed there until 1950.

*What was your work? What was your job?*

Primarily, planning menus for the patients, ordering the food, supplies, and visiting the patients, particularly those on modified diets that had to have special kinds of food. And in those days everybody got personal attention if they were on a modified diet. I'd go see them each day and tell them what they couldn't have, but ask them what they'd like. And we tried to have kind of a menu for the fat-free and the diabetic patterned after the regular menu, but with modifications.

*Would you then direct the cooks?*

The employees.

*The employees, OK. Were you over them?*

Yes.

*Yes. So that you worked with them to develop the menus and ingredients and diets?*

Well, I planned the menus, but then I would work with the cooks on what to order, what they wanted. And then, of course, when the orders came in I quote "received them," checked them in, made sure we had what we wanted. And the only things I didn't always check in with: the meat and vegetables, and

I relied on the cooks to do that . . . and the milk. But the canned goods, that type of thing, was stored not in the kitchen, but in a storeroom and so I supervised the deliveries on those things. And kept an inventory of what we had on hand. They call it a perpetual inventory, so that we always knew how much we had and how much we'd have to order to get us through the next week's menu or month's menu. Some of the deliveries only came once a month so you had to plan ahead of time.

*So you were able to utilize your education in that specialized field. Did you enjoy that?*

Oh, yes. I enjoyed it very much.

*Did you come home very much?*

Well, I think I came home at least once a month.

*Any changes in that time?*

Well, the main change was the house. It was being built. It was started in 1950. And when I would come home on some of the weekends, I'd come home and help paint or do other things. I think even Maie helped with laying the rubber tile here in the kitchen.

*Was your mother in charge of this project?*

No, my brother Ray was.

*Well, did she help with the design and the input.*

No. Well, she provided input, but Maie designed the house.

*Oh, Maie did. I see.*

One of Maie's major courses at Oregon State University . . . she was going there to get her master's degree and she took a course in architectural and interior design.

*Oh, how interesting. OK.*

She designed the house.

*And supervised even though she was away?*

Yes.

*Where was she while you were working in Reno? Where was she working?*

She went to Douglas County, which is Gardnerville, and she taught there for two years. And then she came to Fallon and taught two or three years, maybe four. And then she decided to start working towards a master's degree in education. And so she went to Oregon State and it was while she was there that she started designing the house.

*I see. Did she take that course specifically to help with the design of the house or was that an interest of hers?*

It was an interest of hers.

*During her teaching here, did she live at home?*

Yes. When she taught here she did.

*So that was a comfort to your mother. Was your mother thrilled with the house?*

Oh, yes. We all were. [laughter]

*Was it her dream?*

Well, it was such an improvement over what we had lived in before.

*Was your dad . . . ?*

I think he was pleased.

*How long did you work at St. Mary's?*

I worked there for twenty-two years.

Wow.

Yes.

*So you lived in Reno.*

Yes.

*Oh, that's a lovely city. Did you enjoy that?*

Oh, I did.

*Did you do your skiing?*

Yes.

*Did you? Did you? [laughter]*

I skied every winter.

*Is there a picture of you? Do we have a picture of you on skis?*

I doubt it. I doubt it.

*Well, I hope so.*

I didn't have a ski buddy that liked a camera. [laughter]

*After you left St. Mary's, what did you do then?*

Well, I went to the University of California at Berkeley and studied for a year in the school of public health and got a master's degree in public health. And then subsequent to that I spent a year, actually it was in the school of business administration, doing research on the Kaiser Health Plan.

*What year was that?*

I left St. Mary's in 1970, so the year I spent doing research would have been the fall of 1971 and the spring of 1972.

*Who sponsored that year? Kaiser?*

No, I did. [laughs]

*Oh, it was your own project.*

Well, no the research project, I got paid for that. But the year I went to school, I paid for it out of my own funds. I didn't have a scholarship.

*But you said you did research on the Kaiser Health Plan.*

Yes.

*Was that your own project on the Kaiser project?*

No, actually it was for a professor. He was in the school of business administration, but he was also on the faculty at the school of public health. And his major interest was comparing the cost of health care under a managed health plan like Kaiser's as compared to the cost of regular care. And so I was, you know, basically looking at financial statistics of the Kaiser health plan as compared to the

other kinds of hospital care . . . just the regular private health care.

*So then you lived at Berkeley for one year, was that?*

Two years.

*Two years. And did you come home during that period in the summer or . . . ?*

Yes. I came home for a couple of weeks in the summertime.

*Any changes in those little brief absences?*

Not that I can remember.

*So after you finished in Berkeley, what did you do then?*

Well, then I applied for and was appointed in the Division of Health in the State Department of Human Resources in Carson City. My job then I was what they call Coordinator of the Bureau of Health Facilities. And the Bureau of Health Facilities was responsible for licensing hospitals and nursing homes and group care homes. And we not only did it for the state, but we also did the certifying for the Medicare and the Medicaid program. And it was my responsibility to supervise the quote "inspectors" that went out to visit the different facilities. And to schedule their visits because you had to visit each facility at least once a year. And then depending upon how many things were wrong with it, you had to schedule follow-up visits to see that the corrections were made.

*That's a really responsible position. Then you lived in Carson City?*

Right.

*How did you enjoy that?*

I enjoyed Carson to a degree. It's a state governmental city and it's different from Fallon or Reno because people don't tend to socialize. After they get through with their state job, they tend to go quote "home" and a lot of them commute from Reno to Carson. And I just think that it's a different kind of social mentality there. They don't socialize in the way other employees do in a business.

*How long did you stay in Carson City in that position?*

Well, I stayed in Carson City ten years but I wasn't in that position the full time. There was an opportunity to apply for the administrative State Health Planning Office. And that office was responsible for administering the certificate of need program, which is a governmental program, I don't know if you're familiar with it.

No.

But the certificate of need was intended to keep hospital costs down by making a decision and approving whether a hospital should buy an expensive piece of equipment like the CAT scanner or the MRI or any of those very highly sophisticated pieces of equipment. The problem was that all of the hospitals wanted that equipment because that's the way you get doctors. Well, if you have one of those pieces or instruments in every hospital, then the hospitals have to charge more to cover the cost because they're not used to their full 100 percent capacity. So the idea was to limit the amount of pieces of equipment that would be

in a community depending upon the volume of the patient load. It also had to do with the approving or not approving of beds being built because the same thing applied. All of the hospitals would compete against each other by adding beds and instead of being at ninety percent capacity, they'd end up being at fifty percent capacity. And that increased the cost of the patients.

*Did some of the hospitals try to lobby you?*

They didn't lobby me. They lobbied the governor. [laughter] Oh, you bet!

*You had to deal with a lot of politicking.*

Oh, terrible.

*Oh, my. How long did you stay in that position?*

Well, I probably was in that position five years. You know, I can't be just positive when I switched from one job to the other.

*Sure. Sure.*

But probably five years. And I enjoyed it except for the politics. But it was a tough job because every one of those hospitals wanted to build and build and build. So then they'd either talk with my boss or the governor. My first boss, his name was Roger Trounday. He was a very good boss and very supportive because, you know, he knew what the problems were. And I guess at the time, he had the ear of the governor too. And I remember taking some heat from the hospital association one time on a report we gave. [laughter] And the governor called me out of a meeting and he said, "You stick with it. [laughter] Don't let those hospital guys bother



you.” Well, that helped me a lot. But then we got a new governor and unfortunately a new boss. And he was a very political animal. So, you know, they would just go to the governor and ask him to do something to make us approve those beds. You know, it got to be such an unpleasant situation, I left.

*Oh, my. We need some of those from that earlier administration to help with the new plan.*

Yes.

*So when you left, what did you do?*

Then I retired and came to Fallon.

*OK. What year was that?*

I think it was 1982.

*1982. And how old were you then? When you left, because you left early, did you get a retirement plan? Did you get health insurance?*

Yes, I got both. I had been with the state ten years and that was, I think, the minimum you could be with the state to earn a retirement plan and a health plan.

*Did you decide then to end your career as far as taking a full-time job?*

Yes.

*You opted to retire.*

Right.

*And so then let's bring you back home. Tell me what had happened by then? How were your parents?*

Well, by then my father had passed away. My mother was still doing quite well. And Allie, the Indian lady, was coming everyday to help our mother.

*Where was Maie?*

She was at that time at San Francisco State University.

*OK. And your brothers? Were they here?*

Yes, they were both here. And Ray was running the ranches . . . his own and this place.

*When did he get his own place?*

Well, actually, I think he and Dad bought it before Ray got married, which was in the fifties, I think.

*OK. He was on his own . . .*

Yes, he lived on his place then.

*Did Earl ever marry?*

Oh, yes. Earl married in 1938, I believe it was.

*And where was he living?*

He originally started working at Lahontan Dam. And then they lived at the dam at that time. And then he took a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, I guess. And they were doing the building and upgrading of the wildlife preserve down east of Stillwater.

*Oh, east of Stillwater.*

Yes. And then when Dad got so he couldn't maintain the honey business, Earl

took that over. So both Ray and Earl have always lived here.

*So when you came back, how did that feel to come back, leaving your career and coming back home? Was it mixed emotions?*

Not really. At the time when I left Carson City, I was getting so much heat from the hospital association and from my boss, he was making things very unpleasant for me, so I was glad to go. You know, sometimes they do that. They want to make it so hard for you, you'll quit.

*Were there changes in the ranch and in this area? Were there any changes?*

Well, all of the changes that have occurred have been in the modernization of farming equipment and farming practices. Haying is so much simpler now than it used to be. The same with the combining of wheat. The big mechanized equipment makes it so easy and takes maybe a third of the time it used to as far as haying goes.

*And you don't have to worry about lack of workmen.*

Yes. And you don't have to worry about feeding horses and . . .

*Or feeding the workmen.*

Yes, or feeding the workmen. That's right. [laughs]

*And were there still cattle?*

Yes.

*Were your brothers still having the cattle?*

Yes.

*Did the cattle still stay on these grounds?*

Yes. Well, now, part of them are grazed down at what they call a community pasture and it's down by Harmon Reservoir and all of the farmers have a chance to graze some of their cattle in that pasture area. They have to pay a certain fee to the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District. And they pay so much per head. And I think they're limited to the number of head they can take down there, but they do take them down there.

*So some of yours are grazing there. You were here, but Maie was not. So then tell me how your life developed. Of course, a long of time before that the Churchill County Museum had started. You were away working, but did you have any input or activity with the museum when you would come home or while it was developing?*

No, the only connection I had with the museum was through my mother. When the museum first started, all of the women in the various club groups were asked to volunteer to be hostesses maybe two or three hours a day, one day a week.

*Oh. And who was heading it at that time? Somebody had to be asking these people to help.*

Well, the fellow that was, I think, the primary head at that time, originally that started the museum going was Willie Capucci. He got the thing going. And Nina Kent was active in it and so was Doris Drumm whose husband was owner of Silver State Construction.

*What was Capucci's role in the community? What was he?*

[laughs] Well, Willie really was kind of a freelancer in a way. He owned a bar, the Esquire Club. And after he sold the Esquire Club, he went into public announcing. He bought his own sound system and he would be the public announcer at rodeos and parades and that kind of thing. And he made a living at it, I guess. And I don't know, maybe he invested well after he sold the Esquire Club. So he just kind of freelanced and did the public address type of activity. But he was always a collector.

*Oh, so he had a collection. Wanted a home for it.*

Well, I'm not sure if he wanted a home for it, but I think he did put quite a bit of his collection in. And of course, Willie was known all over town so it was easy for him to get the businesses to volunteer for giving lumber and glass and . . . .

*Did the county give the land?*

No. A couple by the name of Oser, they lived down in southern California, but were good friends of Nina and Hammy Kent. They used to come up here and hunt all of the time. Well, at the time they used to do all this visiting, Fallon was trying to raise money for a library. So the Osers felt like, well, they would buy this old Safeway building that had been vacated because Safeway built a new building. And they would buy that building for the library. Well, before the thing got finalized, Churchill County and Fallon managed to get funds from the Max Fleischmann Foundation to build a library. It's my understanding Mr. Oser said to Mrs. Kent, "Well, but what else could you use this building for?" And she said, "A museum."

*So he must have been a rich man.*

Yes. Oh, very.

*What a wonderful contribution.*

Yes. It was wonderful. Wonderful.

*So the Safeway, is that where the museum is now?*

Right.

*Which would have been pretty far out.*

Yes, it was. It wasn't a very good location for Safeway. The location now on Williams Avenue is much better. So the county took him up on accepting the building and the land for a museum. Well, then they formed a museum association and . . . .

*So the leaders were those people, Capucci and Nina Kent.*

And Doris Drumm. And Marguerite Coverston and there was Mr. Samuel (Sam) Beeghly.

*So there was not a historical society before this was happening.*

No. No.

*This was the start of it.*

That's right. And they formed their association and at the time, all of the funds came through membership or memorials and/or donations. And they didn't have a paid staff. And as I say, the women in the

community volunteered to be a hostess for a few hours a day, one day a week or whatever. And my mother and one of her very good friends used to be hostesses for one afternoon a week. I can't remember the day, but it must have been sometimes on weekends because I remember coming home and visiting and Mom would be in at the museum.

*This must have been a few years after the store was accepted because they'd have to get collections in.*

Well, not too long.

*They just . . .*

Well, everybody donated.

*I mean, they had to do something with these things that came in. Display them.*

Yes. They had to display them.

*Probably just put them out on tables.*

Well, I imagine. I don't remember that much about it at that time because I wasn't living here in Fallon.

*Is the building that's there still part of that Safeway building?*

Yes. The whole building.

*The whole building. Wonderful. We won't go into the whole history of the museum, you know, but I want to find out from you when you came home, what was the situation by then with the Churchill County Museum and Archives. What was it like in 1982 when you came back?*

Well, by then they had a paid director/curator. And the county at that time had agreed to pay the salary of the host and hostesses. And they maintained the building, you know, paid for the repairs and upkeep.

*Did they pay the utilities and . . . ?*

Yes, I think so. And then the association, with this money, kept the exhibits up and changed or maintained the collections. And it was, you know, kind of a mutual effort by the association and the county.

*Membership was growing in the association?*

Yes. Oh, yes.

*Fundraisers to raise money?*

Well, they didn't do a lot of fundraising and they still don't to this day which I think is necessary. But they'd have an annual meeting and it would be a potluck dinner and everybody would bring a potluck dish. And I got involved because I read in the paper that the museum needed volunteers and they were going to have this special meeting or session one day on a Tuesday I think it was for people that would be interesting in volunteering.

*How long were you home when you saw that?*

Oh, probably a year or two. And so I went in on that session. And Sharon Taylor, who was the director/curator at that time, was telling about the different kinds of activities she needed volunteers to do. And one of the things, she had was a Kroy lettering machine. And she needed signs made for the different exhibits. Well, that appealed to me because I

had taken mechanical drawing in college and I felt like I could work with a T-square and a few of those kinds of tools. So I volunteered to come in and make signs. And that's how I got involved in the museum. [laughter]

*And you've been there ever since. And they saw a great potential, and pretty soon you're . . . what were some of the roles that you performed?*

I filled in one time when Sharon was gone. I think she was . . . I think she was ill, I'm not sure. But she asked me to fill in as administrator while she was absent. So I did that because I had been an administrator so it wasn't difficult for me to do. And then after that when she came back, I got involved with writing grant proposals to raise money for special projects. So I was writing several grants a year. And did that for a while. And that's how I ended up with the Oral History Program. I wrote a grant to the Nevada Humanities Committee to get some money to get some training for oral history volunteers. So I wrote the grant, we got the grant. And then Sharon says, "Well, you have to be in charge of it since you wrote the grant." [laughter] That's how come I'm in charge of the Oral History Program.

*Weren't you the treasurer?*

Yes, I was elected treasurer of the museum board of trustees. So I do that, too. I count the money and bank the money.

*Well, I think it's one of the finest rural museums, archives and organization for the size of the town. You contributed a lot to the museum and archives.*

Well, thank you. I think the community's very proud of the museum.

*And from what you were telling me, there is so much participation from so much of the community. So that's worthwhile. When you came back, besides getting involved with the museum, what are some of the other activities then that filled your life during these retirement years?*

Well, gardening has been one. I've raised vegetables . . . primarily vegetables in the garden every since I've been home. And that really is a full-time summer job by the time you pull the weeds and water and everything. Well, I don't do it all now nor does Maie. We have a couple of hired Indians that come once or twice a week to help, especially with the weeding. And then I was involved with the local Farm Bureau organization for a while, but I haven't been in the last few years primarily because I became disenchanted with the leadership. [laughter]

*When did Maie come home to stay?*

I think she's been home five or six years now.

*I want to continue with your retirement, but I want to find out about your mother. Was she still here with you in the house all the time after your retirement?*

No. I think I indicated that Mom was here when I retired, but she wasn't. She died in 1977.

*Oh, oh!*

I was working over in the State Department of Human Resources at the time. Fortunately, she went fairly quickly. She developed one of the summer colds that turned into pneumonia. They had her here in the hospital here for a

while and she became quite dehydrated and we didn't feel she was getting good care, so we took her to St. Mary's in Reno. And she wasn't really sick for a short period of time. Just suddenly one morning she had a very severe pain in her chest and she was gone within a few minutes.

*How old was she when she died?*

Ninety. [laughter]

*Oh, well, that's a nice, nice long life. Seems like she had a happy life and produced a wonderful family and had a great husband.*

Yes, I think so.

*I think she was a wonderful woman.*

She was.

*That's wonderful. Now, two things before we end this. And let's do the easiest one first. [laughter] With Miramar's Top Gun, and that's a fact now that that's moving here and you're preparing for it. How do you see that affecting Churchill County?*

Well, a lot of people think it's going to be great, you know. It's going to bring in millions first of all because of the construction. They have to lengthen the runways from my understanding. And of course, they have to build some housing for the military people that are coming. But I would also think there would be some contractors coming. I don't know how it happens in Miramar, but here in Fallon there are a lot of private contractors doing many parts of the operation of the Navy base. And if that applies to the Top Gun program, I would think it would bring in more contracting companies which means more

families. And the danger there that I think we're mostly concerned with is what is going to happen to our water supply?

*Because that's all going to drain from the agriculture.*

Right. Well, two ways. First of all, there's more demand for water. Secondly, their reclamation is trying to cut back our water to save the *Cui-ui* fish in Pyramid Lake. And so there's going to be less water to resupply the groundwater. And with more demands from water wells and if there's more incursion into the rural areas where more septic tanks are needed, that's going to be a major contaminating factor that's going to endanger the water supply. So I'm really concerned about it. I really am because two or three things are going to happen. Some of the farmers will sell their farms and/or the water rights. And then the ground goes back to being a dusty desert. And there again, there'll be less water to resupply the groundwater. And if that happens, the whole quality of life here will be impacted. So I'm very concerned. I think, you know, there was a letter to the editor the other day about how some people in Fallon aren't very progressive. Well, progress doesn't necessarily mean you grow bigger and bigger and bigger.

*That's right. That's right. And does the base use a lot of water as they grow, do they take a lot of water?*

I'm sure they do. You know, they have a certain amount of water rights. And then they have farmland that they have purchased from farmers that surround the base. And the primary reason for that is the crops keep the dust down so the jets don't have a lot of problem in taking dust. And that's why they



maintained these agricultural fields. Well, there's been a rumor going around that the big shots of the Navy are going to tell the Navy base here to quit farming that land. Well, then *that* water won't be around to resupply. And I suppose they think they want to take it back to the *Cui-ui* fish, but I'm not so sure they can transfer the water rights out of this valley. It seems to me there's some legislation that prohibits that, I hope.

*And then as you were saying before, in a little later period, they had to take over grazing land that some of the ranchers used for the line of these new sophisticated planes.*

Right.

*And when you're out there by some of these areas that I've been out to, you can hear the planes.*

Oh, absolutely.

*There's a noise level. Is there any level of pollution in the air?*

Well, I haven't been aware of that. One of our friends that lives closer to the air base . . . she's sold the place now, but she used to complain about the smell of kerosene when the planes would come in to land. I don't know whether they dumped the fuel or what, but she could smell the kerosene. Well, I don't notice that, but, you know, when the plane goes over here, you can't have a conversation . . . it's so loud.

*Now, before we end the interview, I know that there are many, many meetings and many, many problems and a battle of water rights which certainly is so important to you because this is why the Newlands project was created*

*was for agriculture in this region. So can you just get on tape a little bit of what is happening now. You mentioned the fish and Pyramid Lake and what else that's now being debated and your thoughts about it.*

Well, primarily the big thing now is whether water rights are private property. According to one of our members of the Lahontan Water Protection Association who's done a great deal of research on it and through other court cases, he has come up with a paper that says that a water right is private property and it can't be taken away from you. And if that's the case, then the federal government, i.e. the Bureau of Reclamation, can't take the water away from us, but they keep doing it anyway. They keep cutting down on how much we can have. And I think, you know, we have been in litigation over the water rights for, I don't know, sixty years anyway, I think. And it seems like it's the farmer that always loses. Maybe that's because the farmers never got together as a group before, but they are now. But I think the main issue that will make or break us is if the Supreme Court decides whether the water right is a private property right or whether it isn't. And it isn't just here, it's all over the West. They want to take the water back . . . that is, the federal government does and consider it government property I guess you could call it, and the farmers don't have the right to the water even though they paid for it. When they homesteaded here, they had to pay for the water rights, they had to pay for the construction of the dam and they've been doing it all these years.

*Is it supposed to go to the Supreme Court soon?*

Oh, no. I don't think it's really been decided yet even in a federal court. But I think it will end up in the Supreme Court.

You know, there has to be a decision one way or the other whether the farmer is entitled to the water he has paid for. And I think eventually it will have to go to the Supreme Court. And you just hope that the Supreme Court can see the farmer's side of it as much as the endangered species. [laughter] Well, my concern about that is, and I could be wrong, but I don't think I am . . . the Indians want that water because once they get it, they will sell it to Reno and Sparks. That's my feeling. And that's why they want the water. And this business about the *Cui-ui* fish being a sacred fish is a lot of hogwash.

*But also, I went down and visited, they started a huge recreation on that lake.*

Well, yes. And I read in the paper the other day there's a rumor going around that I think it's Holiday Inns . . . one of those big hotel companies, is going to build a lodge down there. Well, of course, that's another reason the Indians want the water. But, you know, I think there has to be some moderation and some fairness here. Because, as you said, the farmers were lured here with the promise of water and land. And the farmers came and they worked and they paid their debt. And still they want to take it away.

*Yes. I mean, reading the homestead letters gives you a stronger feel. Do you have good representation in Nevada to represent the farmers when they meet with these bureaus and go back to Washington. Are your representatives sympathetic to the farmers?*

Not very much. One of our representatives is . . . well, I could say that both of our senators are from Las Vegas. Senator Reid is from Vegas and he's the one that wants to take the water away from us. Senator Bryan is much

more moderate and he's from Vegas, but he also served as governor so he lived in the northern part of the state for several years. And he knows the problems of the farmers and the ranchers whereas Senator Reid doesn't. Senator Reid really *hates* us. We hate him, too. [laughter] And our representatives are not very sympathetic. I think part of their problem is they don't understand what the thing is all about.

*They don't understand and probably there are less voters, maybe.*

That is correct. Well, especially down in Vegas there's hardly any agricultural interest down there, especially in Clark County. And like you say, there's fewer voters up here in the north.

*Las Vegas is the fastest growing region in this area.*

Oh, yes. It's twice the size of Reno and Sparks.

*And we'll be following that closely and you'll keep me posted. Now, before we end this interview, I know there's this water problem, but what do you see that Churchill County is going to be like in the next decade with all of these changes with the air base and a lot of retired people coming and water problem, what do you see happening in this area?*

Well, I do see that agriculture will diminish and that less of the economy will depend on agriculture. My understanding in one of the articles I read recently is right now agricultural economy is just as big a contributor to the community as the money that is derived from the Navy. But as more people come in and urbanize, then the

amount of the economy that is contributed by agriculture will lessen. And there again, you have a dilemma of the farmer or the agricultural business not being considered a vital interest to the community. You know, it happens all over, I'm sure. People retire or for whatever reason come to live here from someplace in California primarily, but other cities and states, and they come here because they like the setting and the lifestyle. But right away they want to change it. They want to make it like what it is at home. [laughs] And I think that's what's going to happen.

*Well, on behalf of the Churchill County Oral History Project for someone who's deeply involved and has been such a contributor to oral history in this region, we thank you so much for contributing your own interview.*

Thank you.

*This is the end of the interview.*

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